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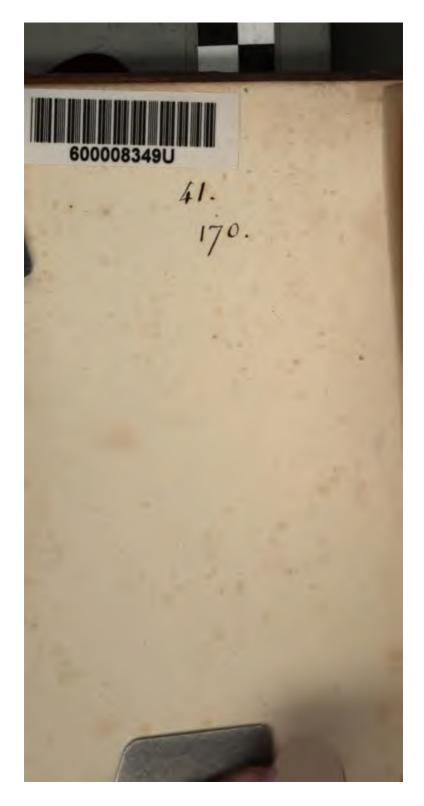
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THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

VOL. I.







THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

VOL. I.

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QUEEN'S POISONER;

OR,

FRANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

A ROMANCE.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

AUTHOR OF "A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES,"
"SPECIMENS OF THE EARLY PORTRY OF FRANCE," ETC.

Good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.

Macbeth.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the following pages the minute details of the historians of the period have been carefully attended to, and so circumstantial are they that little is left to the imagination of the narrator.

None of the characters of the story are altogether fictitious, and most of them are described from pictures drawn by contemporary writers.

Etoile, Henri Etienne, Pasquier, and others have placed the courts of Charles the Ninth and Henry the Third, with all the particulars of every event of moment, so vividly before the mind, that their readers cannot fail to become

intimately acquainted with the personages and circumstances they name.

The character of Marguerite de Navarre has been severely judged by some historians; but the high estimation in which she was held by others, and her known acts of benevolence and mercy, entitle her to lenity, if not to admiration. When the violent prejudices of party are considered, there may be as good reason to paint her amiable as guilty, and she should at least be allowed the benefit of doubt, as well as her unfortunate sister-in-law. Mary Stuart.

Some documents, such as the letters to and from the Northellois, those of Catherine and Cande the Sermon on the Massacre. Ac have been introduced as curious and interesting in themselves, and probably little known to the general English reader.

The incidents are furnished by the chroniciers of the day; and, however extraordinary the accounts of the rise at the Hotel of Hercule, the unfemining conduct of La Chargament and some other traits may appear, they are not fictitious. The sieges of La Rochelle and Domfront are not less real, and the escapes on the night of St. Bartholomew are only more dramatic and fearful in fact than the romance presents them.

Of Bianco and his mistress scarcely anything has been invented: their spells, talismans,

" Treasons, murders, desolations,"

are upon record. It would occupy several volumes if all the crimes attributed to Catherine in the "Discours Merveilleux," and other publications, were detailed.

The valuable work of Dulaure has contributed not a little to verify the descriptions of the city of Paris as it then existed; that of M. Dreux du Radier has also been found useful in affording much information respecting the female characters of note introduced, and the charming "Mémoires de la Reine Marguerite" have furnished costume and manners.

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INTRODUCTION.

To the liberality of a kind friend, whose library has been open to the author, she is indebted for the facilities which have rendered the compilation of this historical romance an occupation of pleasure; and to that friend the work is affectionately inscribed.

London, April, 1841.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

CHAPTER L.

LA PAIX BOITEUSE.

Gone to be married—gone to swear a peace!

Shakspeare.

FULL, bright and sparkling in the brilliant sun of early June, the waters of the Loire rolled majestically along beneath the high-arched bridge of Blois, on which stood an almost countless multitude of people, gazing with eager curiosity, evidently in expectation of some interesting spectacle. The river was covered with gaily-ornamented barges, filled with eager spectators. The royal banner of France waved from the highest tower of the castle; and from the heights, where rose the spires of the cathedral and the palace of the bishop, streamed in the breeze gay pennons, emblazoned with the arms of the church and of the town. broad quays, shaded with enormous trees, were swarming with people, who pressed and crushed

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their neighbours in their endeavours to obtain the most advantageous position from whence to view the spectacle, for which they had waited for hours in patient anticipation. It appeared that some event of absorbing interest was about to take place, and the same eager curiosity seemed to animate every individual in that immense mass of human beings. From the river-side to the embattled hills above, the antique streets of Blois rise almost precipitously: many of them are cut in steps to afford an easier ascent to foot-passengers, no horse, nor vehicle of any kind, being able to attempt to mount the stony way, which seems a part of the rock; from distance to distance, where a turn of the street afforded a glimpse of the town and river below, every roof and window was crowded with heads, thrust forward with auxious desire to behold what all sought.

It was easy to detect that the havoc of recent war had left its traces on many of the houses and walls; but the greatest care had been taken to conceal any such appearances by gorgeous draperies of tapestry hung in all directions. Where breaches still remained unrepaired, temporary scaffolding had been erected for musicians, gaily and fantastically attired, whose loud instruments joined the swelling echoes of the

trumpets, which at intervals announced the nearer approach of welcome and honoured guests to the royal party, who awaited with the same anxiety as the populace the last peal of cannon from the ramparts, proclaiming that the young King of Navarre, and his illustrious mother, had entered the gates of Blois, attended by King Charles the Ninth in person, and a gallant train of nobles, all vying with each other in attentions to their long-sought visitors.

Greeted by the admiring shouts of the excited multitude, the royal cavalcade wound slowly up the steep hill which conducts to the castle: fresh peals of artillery announced their arrival before its gates, and fresh bursts of music heralded their entrance through the venerable arch, which leads to the court of Stephen.

They reached the foot of the beautiful winding staircase, whose carved ornaments glittered like alabaster in the dancing sunbeams, and through every loophole of whose elegantly wreathed and twisted tower looked forth richly-dressed ladies of the court and cavaliers in splendid costumes, studding the whole surface at rising distances, till, at the dome-shaped summit, groups appeared, waving scarfs and flags, embroidered with glittering devices in honour of the day. Here King Charles alighted

from his richly adorned charger, and his example was followed by all his courtiers, who approached the Queen of Navarre and her son and daughter, and assisted them to dismount.

Above the elaborately ornamented gateway, where stand in high relief the statues of the Father of his People and his beloved Duchess Anne, in a projecting balcony, about the centre of the façade of the palace, a party of magnificently-attired ladies were stationed. Conspicuous amongst them, was the majestic and commanding figure of the Queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, and great was the beauty displayed by the distinguished females who surrounded her. As the stunning sound of the cannon told the arrival of the royal cortège, a shower of garlands descended from the balcony of the Queen-mother, at the feet of Jeanne de Navarre.

The countenance of Catherine had hitherto worn an expression of anxious suspense almost painful, as from time to time she bent over the heavy stone parapet on which she was leaning; and her eye wandered with uneasy glances around, as she occasionally turned to some of her attendant ladies, and inquired hastily: "Is the Princess Marguerite not yet arrived?" The reply in the negative, which had been several times given, seemed to cause her considerable

annoyance; her dark brows contracted, and her lips became compressed with emotions which she seemed desirous of concealing. When, however, she beheld the Queen of Navarre alighting from her horse, her stirrup held by Charles, whose face was irradiated with smiles, and when she marked the happy, frank and grateful expression on the face of the noble-minded mother of the young Bearnois, a load seemed removed from her heart, and with a long, deep-drawn breath, she murmured to herself, "All is secure!"—and turning from the balcony, entered the chamber of state, into which her guests were shortly afterwards conducted by their courteous and gallant host.

Nothing could exceed the cordiality of meeting extended to the unsuspicious and openhearted Jeanne, whose eyes filled with tears of pleasure, as she presented to the Queen-mother her blushing and beautiful daughter Catherine, and her young son, whose bashfulness kept him constantly in the rear, close to her. Embraces, congratulations, protestations of eternal friendship, entreaties that the past should be buried in oblivion, and vows and prayers that the future might be all sunshine throughout the united kingdoms of France and Navarre, with assurances of the delight and gratification de-

rived from the present,— all this greeted the ears and charmed the hearts of the single-minded and guileless pair whom it was intended to deceive, and who had, in an evil hour, placed themselves and their cause in the hands of an enemy unscrupulous in guilt, undaunted in crime, and unmatched in cunning.

A magnificent entertainment followed, when every device that ingenuity could contrive was employed to delight the senses and engage the minds of the unsophisticated mountaineers, whom this display of splendour was calculated to astonish. In the retirement of her chamber, that night, Queen Jeanne threw herself into the arms of her son, and exclaimed, "Oh, my beloved Henry! what have I now to wish. The blood-shed and cruelty which have so long disgraced and desolated these fair realms, are at an end, and peace is now as undoubted as dearly welcome."

"Heaven grant it, dearest mother!" answered Henry. "How could we ever have suspected the King, or his glorious mother?—they love us, and desire only the good of France. We are indeed fortunate. But, mother, amongst all those beauties who dazzled me with their looks, how happened it that the coy Marguerite was not there? I should like to see my bride elect,

for all this is nothing without her. They tell me she deserves her title of *La Lune*, for that she eclipses all these stars, which," added he, smiling, "I should scarcely be inclined to believe; though I felt so rustic amongst them that I scarcely dared raise my eyes."

Queen Jeanne's countenance was instantly overcast, but she made no answer to her son's remarks. She had observed the absence of the principal person concerned in their visit, and she had noticed likewise the agitated expression of Catherine's face, as she replied to her inquiries after the Princess, and assured her, that, but for some mistake, for which she could scarcely account, Marguerite would have been the first to welcome her future mother-in-law, and pour forth her thanks, and tell the pleasure she felt in the prospect before her.

Jeanne's thoughts in a moment ran back over a series of years. She recalled the time when her warm-hearted and confiding husband had journeyed to Paris, on the death of Henry II; and no welcome greeted him, no one met him on his road, no feasts were prepared for him, no palaces decorated to receive him; but his very baggage was allowed to remain unsheltered in the court-yard of the house he entered, and this same Queen Catherine had re-

ceived him almost as an alien. She reverted to the schemes and plots laid to entrap and to annoy him; the endeavours to withhold from him his dues; the injuries, the vexations, the deceptions that had driven him from the court of the infant King; the enmities of the Guises and Lorraines; and, above all, she remembered with a shudder, Anthony of Navarre's last injunctions to herself, never to trust in Catherine.

All this a flash of thought brought before her, but she shook off the feeling it conjured up, and conversed with her son on the probable results of their present negociations, and the marriage which must inevitably seal a bond of union, which it would be the mutual interest of each party to keep inviolate.

Henry and his mother, therefore, separated, happy and contented with their reception, and full of blissful anticipations, which the lately concluded peace, afterwards justly called "La Paix Boiteuse" seemed to promise them.

Catherine de Medicis had also sought the retirement of her private apartments, fatigued, more than was her wont, with the demonstrations she had found it necessary to make, of her friendliness and hospitality. A few, only, of her confidential ladies attended her: these were generally kept near her person; with some pe-

culiar purpose in view she was careful to choose them for qualities which suited her plans, and she made them instruments of the deep designs with which her ever-teeming mind was rife. Her step was disordered, and her brow lowering, as she paced backwards and forwards in uncontrolled agitation.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, passionately, "that the plans I have arranged with such care, and which have hitherto succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, are to be ruined by the wilfulness of a headstrong girl? I feared this, yet I hardly expected she would so utterly have set my commands at defiance, as to absent herself on so momentous an occasion. This slight must be instantly repaired. Did any of you observe when Marguerite quitted our company on the road from Paris?"

There was some hesitation amongst the ladies, before an answer was returned by Madame Claude de Lorraine, that the horses, litters and coches of the Queen-mother being before those of the Princess and her suite, her having suddenly quitted them, instead of pursuing with them the road to Blois, had been unobserved.

"I can trust nobody but Bianco," said the Queen, pettishly; "send for him instantly. His wit must find a remedy for this business; he shall go to Marguerite, and not leave her until she sets out, to do away by her presence the impression her negligent imprudence may have made. René," she continued, addressing, as he entered, a remarkably handsome man, whose complexion told that he was her countryman,-" go, instantly, to Chenonceau, - I cannot trust myself to write to Marguerite: I cannot send any of my gentlemen, for I would not have it known that she has acted from caprice, but it is most important that she should delay no further. -You can do much-remember, she is impetuous, proud, and self-willed; be careful not to irritate her: humour her as you can, but gain her promise to come instantly to Blois, - nay, leave her not till she enters this chamber, and when once here I will take care that she escapes me not again. The night has not far waned, you will doubtless find her dreaming over childish pleasures, -literature, poetry !-when a kingdom is at stake! —draw her from them, use every means, but let me hear that she has entered these gates by morning's dawn."

He to whom the Queen-mother addressed these words in a hurried and passionate accent bowed low, but replied not by words. The bright glance of his significant eye, however, expressed determination and promptitude. Catherine paused before him for one moment, and then with a smile of peculiar, satisfied meaning, waved her hand, and her messenger had quitted her presence. "And now," said the Queen, "let the King my son know that I await his visit. Every one may retire; and while his Grace is here, be careful that I have no interruption."

Charles was shortly afterwards announced, and entered, his pale countenance lighted up with unusual gaiety. His step was light, and his eye full of mirth, as, hastening to his mother, he kissed her hand, and then casting himself on a couch, gave way to an uncontrollable fit of merriment. Catherine took a seat beside him and watched this ebullition, while a slight smile curled her lip. When he was in some degree recovered, he said, — "Well, madam, tell me candidly, do you not think I have acted my part to admiration?"

"Yes, Charles," said his mother, "your conduct has been faultless; it remains only to be followed up."

"Oh!" cried the King, with renewed laughter, "leave that to me: you will see with what skill I will draw them into the net. I have sent letters already to every part of the kingdom, granting these foolish Huguenots more than they demanded. I shall do precisely what my falconer does when he sends his hawks in

search of prey. It is beyond measure ridiculous how they all come to the call, and how thoroughly deceived the mother-bird and her half-fledged birdling are. We had a most satisfactory and confidential interview before we parted for the night."

"And to what subject did you chiefly lead?" asked Catherine anxiously.

"We talked of Marguerite," said Charles. -The Queen frowned. "That young haggard, by the way, had nearly destroyed all to-day by her absence, but I expatiated on her modesty, ha, ha! - on her timidity, - and Jeanne seemed satisfied. It amused me not a little that she could picture to herself Margot such an awkward frightened thing as her own daughter, who but for that, would be handsome as De Soissons observed. The credulous mother of our affianced bridegroom suggested that the Pope's dispensation might be long to obtain. 'No, no, said I, 'my own dearest aunt, my darling friend, I honour you more than pope or cardinal; and as for my sister, I love her better than I fear the power of Rome. If the Pope is fool enough to oppose my will, I here declare to you that I will take Margot by the hand and lead her to the altar in despite of the whole conclave.' She laughed at this. 'I am not a Protestant, as you know, dear aunt,' I continued with a sigh, which had great effect, 'but I am no bigot: I have given my promise, and my word is sacred.' I then took occasion to praise her son, who looks like a young bear from his own mountains scared by hunters; and, in short, I have left her and our Marguerite's husband elect thoroughly satisfied with all things."

"I trust so, my son," said Catherine. "Tomorrow we shall have Marguerite here: we
must amuse and humour her for the time, but
I fear some outburst of thoughtless folly on her
part. I dread the ridicule she will probably
cast on this young Bearnois, who is certainly
quite unworthy of her."

"Oh she has plenty of lovers to amuse her; what can her husband signify?" said Charles, carelessly. "As for him, it is clear he is a fool whom we can mould at will. It is fortunate that he has but little of his grandfather, and a great deal of his weak-headed father about him. We need not waste a thought on him, at all events."

The mother and son parted with mutual congratulations, and retired to concoct fresh schemes of deception, which should render the escape of their unsuspecting victims impossible.

CHAPTER II.

LA LUNE.

J'aurai toujours au cœur écrite Sur toutes fleurs la Marguerite! Le Blason de la Marguerite.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS was at this period in the very zenith of that beauty which was the theme of admiration throughout France, and the inspiration of all the poets of the time: her influence was felt and acknowledged whereever she appeared, and, where she chose to exert it, rarely resisted. She was totally without her mother's ambition,—to her were unknown her mother's cruelty and harshness; all she seemed to have inherited from her was her power of fascination. She possessed warmth of heart, generosity and tenderness, with a fund of good-humour, and a carelessness beyond bounds. Like her aunt and namesake, the accomplished sister of Francis the First, she delighted in the society of the learned and distinguished, spent much of her time in elegant literary pursuits, and was

a munificent patroness of genius and talent. Witty, spirited, full of observation and humour, ever pleased with novelty, ever seeking fresh objects of admiration, instructed even beyond her period, acute and rapid in her conclusions—all her bright qualities were dimmed by an inordinate love of admiration, and a vanity which carried her into every kind of imprudence. Self-gratification was the end and aim of her existence, and this weakness had been fostered by her mother, who dreaded the appearance of talent in all her children, jealously alive to the possibility of their interfering with her ambitious projects.

Never had Marguerite been hitherto known to allow serious thoughts or duties to interfere with her enjoyments; and if they were forced upon her she dismissed them as soon as possible, resolving that they should not cloud the bright sky of the paradise she endeavoured to create for herself. Too exalted in station to care for the cavilling of the vulgar—too thoughtless by nature to be impressed by the world's censure—independent of every one—brought up in an atmosphere of luxury and dissipation, she was the slave or the empress of pleasure.

Her manners were seducing to a degree that

surpassed belief; her smile was a spell, her beauty dazzling, and her power of fascination unquestioned. The court over which she presided, and which was one exclusively her own, seemed to combine all that can be imagined of enchantment, ease, happiness and liberty. This fairy court was now held at the beautiful palace of Chenonceau, on the Cher, which, though the Queen-mother loved frequently to reside there, she had given up for the present to the Princess, - her views and occupations making it desirable that she should always be near the King, who had on more occasions than one evinced a desire to emancipate himself from the thraldom of her presence, and to act for himself.

The reminiscences of her father's celebrated and lovely mistress, Diana, which might have been unpleasing to a daughter of a different frame of mind, only served as an example to confirm her in her resolution to lead a life of uninterrupted enjoyment; and the halls of Chenonceau, never in the time of the fair favourite herself, could vie with the glories and enchantments with which its present deity loved to invest them.

Marguerite had consented to the union proposed to her by her ambitious and designing

mother, because she was aware that her birth entailed upon her the penalty of being sacrificed to secure some supposed political good. Although, to a certain extent, indifferent as to who might be the husband chosen for her, she was particularly averse from becoming the wife of one whom she looked upon as her inferior in breeding, in manners, and in education. Refined to fastidiousness, outward seeming was to her a chief recommendation; and the accounts she had heard of the young mountaineer were not calculated to excite any desire in her mind to hasten the fulfilment of their contract. When therefore she, in obedience to her mother's injunctions, set out with the royal party from Paris to Blois, it was with extreme reluctance; and as she felt the fresh air of the country breathe on her brow, the thought occurred to her that never could the romantic retreat of Chenonceau be more enticing than at this moment, when the groves must be full of nightingales and the gardens blazing with countless flowers, all wooing her visit and reproaching her absence. Accordingly she proposed to the gay party, as thoughtless and fond of excitement as herself, all devoted to her wishes and glad to escape the formalities which they anticipated at Blois, that they should turn aside from the

road they had intended to take and shape their course to the palace on the Cher.

Thither the joyous cavalcade pursued their way; and while at the castle of Blois the gorgeous preparations were in full vigour for the reception of her intended husband, she left the care of all to others more interested in the event, and, to the inexpressible mortification of her mother, betook herself to her shades, surrounded by all that wit, talent, and mirth could furnish to render her sojourn a terrestrial paradise.

The night was far spent, the glories of the moon in its height of splendour irradiated the gardens of the famous bower of Diana; an atmosphere of perfume rose from the surrounding flowers and shrubs; and the chequered light which streamed through the foliage of the young trees was reflected from the bosom of a transparent lake, in the midst of which rose a fountain of delicately carved white marble, whose jets formed themselves into the semblance of feathers and flowers, and caught rainbow hues from the rays that glimmered above and around. Light arcades of Moorish architecture, formed of various-coloured marbles, supported innumerable small lamps depending from slender silver chains, which, waved to and fro by the gentle

night-breeze, seemed like so many fire-flies in motion. At the extremity of the lake a pile of natural rocks had been taken advantage of by art, and the waters of a stream had been guided to fall over them in numerous cascades. Here and there, in the hollows of the grey and moss-grown stone, lamps had been introduced, and, as the waters came tumbling over the dark masses, their glow-worm light shimmered and glittered through the dancing spray. A hundred nightingales sang and answered each other in the neighbouring woods, and were heard in the pauses of the lute, which accompanied some voice as soft as their own, while their rapturous chorus acknowledged the skill of the musician which they strove to excel by louder and more persevering melody. The weather was such as is sometimes met with at the close of spring, intensely, yet deliciously warm, and the sky so clear that it seemed as though no clouds could ever be known in a region so bright and blest.

The beautiful Marguerite and her ladies were formed to enjoy such a scene; and they gave themselves entirely up to its charm, banishing all thoughts foreign to its enchanting influence, and forgetting for the time that there existed a world beyond. Ronsard, the king of poets and the favourite of kings, the adored of the Muses

and the pride of France, the glory of his native Loire, and the deity of La Lune, was there. He sang his own verses in a voice all passion. What he wanted in science and in power was amply made up in exquisite feeling and expression, and none who heard him with breathless and spell-bound attention, but wondered they could ever listen to other strains.

His quick transitions from pathetic to cheerful pleased every heart, and found admirers in every listener. Now he addressed extemporary verses to the goddess of the place, then alluded with quick thought to passing events of the day, poured forth soft compliments to each fair one in turn, and proved himself as good a courtier as a poet. Nor was the learning forgotten for which he had attained so high a reputation, and which was at that period so highly prized, though its display has since justly caused his works to be considered pedantic. But who should venture to criticise the master minstrel. who had purified the language, and introduced so many classical graces? So far from it, his delighted auditors were intoxicated with enthusiasm, and the enjoyment of the night was at its height, when an attendant approached the Princess, and whispered in her ear,

She started. "Not now," she said; "it is

impossible: were it the King himself, or my mother in person, I would not admit them.— Say, I will give audience to-morrow to any one from Blois, but not to-night. Oh! divine Ronsard, sing again;—why should anything of the world without intrude to break the spell you have cast over our souls?"

"No, madam," said the poet; "if my songs deserve the praises you have showered upon them, the poet merits a reward; and mine shall be to hear you sing, to listen to accents such as we only have the privilege of hearing, and such as never even bless the dreams of those beyond our paradise."

"Give me a lute," said Marguerite, "and let me try, if the fearful thought of the chain preparing for me have not altogether scared away my powers. But the verse, dear Ronsard, shall be thy own, and must delight, even if my voice should fail. How can it fail when I sing the lays of him whose natural bed was of flowers, and over whom the Muses themselves poured from enchanted urns the rosy water of inspiration?"

The delighted poet acknowledged this complimentary allusion to the legend attached to his infancy, with emotion. It had been said of him, that when a child, as his nurse was carrying him across a meadow, he fell from her arms into the midst of the flowers which grew there in profusion, and that a damsel who was passing by, bearing a vase of rosewater, as she stooped to lift up the smiling infant, deluged him with the contents. This was considered a presage of his future fame and excellence, and was frequently mentioned by his admirers.

The Princess, with a fervour and delicacy which excited in her hearers all the enthusiasm which she herself felt, then sang a celebrated song from the "Amours" of the great poet.

" Fifteen levely childish springs, Hair of gold in crisped rings, Check and lips with roses spread, Smile, that to the stars can lead; Grace, whose every turn can please; Virtue, worthy charms like these; Breast, within whose virgin snows Lies a gentle heart that glows 'Mid the sparkling thoughts of youth, All divine, with steady truth; Eves, that make a day of night; Hands, whose touch so soft and light Hold my soul a prisoner long; Voice, whose soft, entrancing song, Now a smile, and now a sigh, Interrupts melodiously !-These are charms within whose spell All my peace and reason dwell." .

See "Specimens of the Early Poetry of France."
 —1835.

After the applause had died away with which this poem had been received, Etienne Jodelle, the accomplished poet, painter, sculptor and architect, whose devotion to the mighty master kept pace with that of his warmest admirers, recited some of his own compositions, and was followed by Baïf, also a poet of the school and a worthy pupil of Ronsard. Jodelle soon after begged to introduce to the company a young minstrel, destined afterwards to become celebrated, but who was at this period not more than sixteen, - handsome, elegant, and full of genius. He was named to the gratified Princess as a new candidate for her favour, and some jests were circulated when it was remarked that the young Du Perron was a Calvinist; and the coincidence of his arrival at the present moment might be considered propitious, as the Protestant bridegroom of his patroness could not object to him on the score of religion.

"Alas!" said Marguerite, with feigned gravity, "I fear the Muses will forswear me in future—the snows of Bearn will chill them, and they will forsake me. Can any tell me in what semblance my tyrant appears—has any seen him?—what says he—what does he, besides hunt, and eat, and fight?—has he any quality to fit him for our world, or must we bar its entrance to him at once?"

A soft voice near the Princess whispered, "If your Highness would really like to know, you have only to admit Bianco, the Italian, who waits without with some message from Blois: he is not a bad painter, nor does he want wit to set off his colouring."

She who spoke, and while she did so, blushed deeply, was the young and lovely Marie de Cleves, about the age, and nearly answering to the description which the poet had given in the lines they had just heard, and in which he probably sought to paint her. She had approached softly from a grove of orange trees, where she had been apparently occupied in attending to the animated communication of a young page of the Duke of Anjou, who, on leaving her, retired quickly, and was lost amidst the surrounding shades. She held in her hand a billet, which bore a seal, the device on which was a vessel and star, with the words Te duce, at which she hastily glanced, not unobserved, but unnoticed, and thrust it into her bosom.

The advice given by the beautiful Marie, for which she doubtless had her reasons, was listened to at once by the volatile Princess.

"Bianco, did you say?" exclaimed she,—why did I refuse him admittance? He has talents beyond his station, and his powers of jesting are

of no ordinary character. He shall describe to us all that we have missed seeing by our escapade; he shall speak of our lords and masters; you, Marie, and I, who are fellow victims, must hear him with attention. You must chide Anjou, that he has deserted us for our enemies:or will you depute that office to the expectant Prince de Condé?" The face of Marie became so pale as to alarm her friend,-" What folly have I said!" she whispered softly .- " Alas! I forget that all have not their hearts unscathed, as I have! Ah! my friend, you are preparing for yourself a future of care. Believe me, it is well to adorn the heart with painted pictures of love, but not to engrave them upon it :- but I speak as one who never loved, and one, I feel, who never can."

"How!" said Marie, "is there not one amongst all those who adore you who claims one thought?"

"Yes," answered Marguerite, gaily, "many; nay, perhaps all in turn, but the vision passes away as quickly as a shadow on a mirror: my heart is so transparent, that it takes all impressions and retains none. But, we are serious,—let us all return to the river gallery where our repast awaits us: we will summon René, and add another amusement to the night."

The gay party immediately obeyed her signal; and some, in laughing groups, strolled leisurely along the perfumed banks of the château, while others entered the glittering skiffs which were moored along the shore for their accommodation, and glided down the stream to the marble steps that conducted them to the singularly beautiful apartment which Catherine de Medicis had constructed above the arches of the bridge which spanned the Cher. Its windows now shone with innumerable lights, and within was displayed a splendid banquet. When the party were all assembled, a concert of soft music rose from boats stationed beneath, and aubades and serenades, for the hour suited either night or morning, accompanied by instruments of various sorts, continued at intervals during the repast. Bianco, the messenger of the Queenmother, was introduced, and with infinite tact avoided betraying the extreme anxiety of his mistress, who, he represented, merely asked her daughter's presence, as she was sure the novelty of the scene, and the variety of characters she would behold would interest her extremely. He then touched on peculiar traits of several of the distinguished persons who accompanied Queen Jeanne, seizing the

ridiculous, and making the eccentric so prominent, that he convulsed his inconsiderate hearers with laughter. He was too politic, however, to say anything about the principal actors in the drama, but contrived so artfully to excite curiosity, that Marguerite was completely won; and before they separated, she had agreed, that with all her suite she would repair early on the following morning to Blois.

CHAPTER III.

CAJOLERY.

Oh! dark deceit with painted face for show,
Oh feigned friend, deceiving people so!
Thos. Churchyard.

QUEEN Jeanne was seated near one of the carved windows of the château, which overlooked a huge round tower and the bastioned walls of that portion of the building whose severe architecture proclaimed their Roman origin, and whose solid and unornamented extent formed a remarkable contrast with the light and elaborately adorned facade opposite, on which all the taste of Francis I. and his successors had been lavished; where, from stage to stage, the art of the builder was displayed in gorgeous tracery, more remarkable for its variety than congruous effect. Here a range of windows was connected by gracefully twisted and fluted pillars, whose richly foliaged capitals supported tablets filled with classical figures in bold relief; beyond, the character changed, and the hand of an earlier architect was perceptible; grotesque heads peeped from the cornices, and extravagant forms wreathed themselves into harmony, to form a graceful termination to some spire or tourelle. This great work, which had employed the attention of so many kings, was not yet completed; workmen were still busied in making additions to one of the wings, though for the present all labour was suspended, and all the population of the town were given up to rejoicing.

An immense court beneath was adorned with gardens, laid out with taste and filled with choice flowers: overtopping the outer walls rose the towers of the church of the Jesuits, frowning, as it were, on the regal splendour which it commanded. A shade of melancholy reflection was on the fine features of Jeanne de Navarre, as she marked the pleased interest with which her son and his young companion, the Prince de Condé, were watching the manceuvres of some troops in the great square opposite; and as she withdrew her glance it fell on the form of her daughter Catherine, who, seated on a low stool at her feet, was gazing up in her face.

"Are you thinking of our mountains, too?" said Jeanne, half smiling. "Your face seems a

reflection of my own, and so perhaps are your thoughts."

"Dear mother," answered the young Princess,
"I shall never love any place so well: — I feel
as if it were impossible to breathe in this confined air. Yet how beautiful and rich is everything about us, and how kind are the Queenmother and her ladies!"

"And the young cavaliers, Catherine?" said her brother; "you say nothing of them. I wonder which amongst them will be so fortunate as to please my pretty sister?"

"They are very agreeable, no doubt," said Catherine, blushing; "but I am too rustic to attract their courtly regards. Besides, I do not like their air of condescension and superiority."

"What think you of the Count de Soissons, with whom you danced last night?" asked Henry.

Catherine blushed still more, and turned away as she said, "Oh, least of all I like him; he spoke to me as if it were necessary to lower the tone of his conversation to suit my ignorance. I cannot admire him, though he is certainly extremely handsome."

"You are singular, Catherine," said her mother; "for he is thought one of the most attractive gallants at court." "There are many others equally so, I think," replied the Princess, "and less supercilious."

"You are severe, little critic," cried Henry, "and have already made progress in court manners, which I fear I never shall do. I am far more at home in camp: nevertheless one may amuse oneself here." He whispered to Condé, who smiled gaily at his remarks, and at that moment a messenger from the Queen-mother was announced, and the doors being thrown open the envoy himself appeared, who approached and knelt at the feet of the Queen of Navarre.

This personage was René Bianco, the Florentine, whose offices with his royal mistress were so many and various, that it was almost impossible positively to pronounce what position he held. Now little more than a menial and now little less than an ambassador, Catherine employed him in negociations of importance to the state, and in trivial messages to her favourites and her ladies. His insinuating address and remarkably handsome exterior rendered him, if not welcome, at least tolerated, more especially in the latter capacity. He had been several years in the Queen's service, and enjoyed her favour in a peculiar degree. It was more than whispered that his science as

a chemist was that which chiefly recommended him to his royal mistress, who, in common with most persons of all ranks in that age, sought diligently after the hidden secrets of nature, and left no means unemployed to discover her mysteries. It was said that the mother of Bianco was of Indian origin, and that from her he had gained knowledge withheld from students of other climes. A certain degree of suspicion and some feeling of awe attended him, though it was rather in his absence than his presence, for his ready wit and fluent conversation were not calculated to inspire other than agreeable thoughts. It was only in the occasional glance of his dark, sparkling, and deeplyset eye that might be detected a sinister character, and a searching and eager expression at variance with his frank and joyous manner.

Bianco was the bearer to Queen Jeanne of a token from his mistress of a pair of perfumed and richly embroidered gloves, then an article of great luxury, and a bouquet of choice flowers, arranged so that the delicate blossoms appeared like a star in the centre, and round it sprang leaves of the olive, the laurel, and the cypress: a silver riband bound the whole, on which was embroidered, in letters of precious stones, the motto which Jeanne had adopted, in allusion to the state of her affairs,—"SAFE PEACE, VICTORY, OR HONOURABLE DEATH."

Bianco respectfully presented this, at the same time expressing the compliments with which he was charged by Catherine. "My mistress," he said, "orders me to say that she sends your Grace these flowers in token of the love that springs from the centre of her heart for you and yours, and which will be her guiding star in time to come. You have granted her Peace, and she sends you the Olive; you have gained the victory over civil war, and she sends you the Laurel; you have put to death every hatred and malice, and she sends you the Cypress."

Queen Jeanne received the present most graciously, and a blush passed over her face as she remembered the thoughts she could not entirely banish, which continued to intrude in secret, but were cleared away whenever their object appeared.

"And to your Grace," continued René, kneeling to young Henry, "I am charged to deliver a sealed packet, which will explain itself; only venturing to add, that—as she who sends it bade me say, that—as the daisy looks up towards the god of morning for life and joy, so she looks towards you."

24 THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

Henry, not without emotion, broke the seal, and discovered a bunch of enamelled marguerites, which he immediately transferred to his bosom with a gallant gesture, and thanked the messenger with a frank smile.

As René rose from his knee, an attendant entered the apartment, and proclaimed the approach of King Charles, who, advancing hastily and without ceremony to Queen Jeanne, saluted her with all the apparent natural enthusiasm of youth, throwing his arms about her, and uttering the tenderest expressions of affection,—calling her, with almost infantine playfulness, his own aunt, his all, his beloved,—till, overcome with his kindness, the good Queen could not suppress her tears, and a feeling of faintness crept over her, as the bouquet of Catherine, to which she had been smelling, dropped from her hand, and she leant back in his arms for support. Her daughter and her son were instantly at her Bianco removed the flowers, and presented to Charles an essence which instantly revived her: then, bowing low, he retired. he left the chamber, charged with the grateful acknowledgments of the Queen of Navarre to Catherine, young Henry, still occupied with his mother, looked suddenly up, and was struck with the reflection in an opposite mirror of a countenance in which gratified malevolence and hatred were so strongly depicted, that it appeared as if the face of a fiend had looked upon him. He started with a thrill of borror, but before he could account in any way for the apparition, it was gone; and as he had not noticed the departure of Bianco, he was not aware that the glass gave back his features.

"Dearest aunt, we have excited and worn your spirits too much," tenderly exclaimed Charles; "I would my good nurse Mabille were here to tend you. We will send instantly to Paris for her; she is the kindest and best of women, and will nurse you as she does her own child, for such she calls me. But surely you must know Mabille; she is your countrywoman, it was from you my mother had her first."

"Oh yes, my dear cousin!" answered Jeanne with animation, "if it be Mabille Rolland, she is indeed a worthy creature; but many years have passed since I have seen her. It was but lately that I sent a young man, an orphan whom I protect, to Paris, and recommended him to her care while in your dangerous city."

"Ah, my own sweet aunt!" exclaimed

Charles laughing,-"you country people have such strange ideas of our Paris, -death and destruction to body and soul seem to you to fill every breeze, and lurk behind the very church-doors. But we are harmless, depend upon it, or will prove, at least to you, how happy we can be in the midst of our wickedness, and how well the air of my Catholic capital can agree with my beloved heretics. My good cousin," he continued, addressing Henry, "you will, I fear, seduce us from our duties; for my own part, I do not mean to fast for a month to come, and as to confession," he added in a lower tone, "all the confession we will think of shall be that of love. We have beauties here, Henry, who will shame your mountain nymphs,-except one," he added gallantly, turning to Catherine; "and it shall go hard but Marguerite and her ladies make you forget that there are stars in the heavens. To-night we have a masque, where your courage, young knight, will be severely tried; and I must tell you at once Margot is arrived, and expiring till she sees you at her feet. It is time that I introduce you; my mother waits her Grace's pleasure to present a daughter to her."

As he spoke music was heard without; the

broad curtains of the tapestry which adorned the lower part of the chamber were drawn aside, and two long lines of attendant nobles and ladies were discovered on each side of a spacious gallery, from the upper end of which advanced, through a richly decorated hall, the Queen-mother and the Princess Marguerite, led by the Duke of Anjou, and followed by a train of ladies all gorgeously attired except the Princess herself, who wore a remarkably plain riding-dress, and whose countenance was clouded with discontent.

The long-desired meeting now took place; but, to those who looked on, it was evident that there was neither pleasure nor cordiality in the salute given and received by the beautiful and haughty bride elect, who, in the coldest and briefest manner, replied to the kind address of Queen Jeanne and the frank but timid compliment of her son, whom she scarcely appeared to notice, and, as soon as possible, turned from them and busied herself in conversation with the nobles and ladies round her. To Henry's inexperienced eye the carelessness of Marguerite's toilet was indifferent; not so to that of Queen Jeanne, whose quick apprehension saw in it studied neglect, a circumstance which instantly alarmed her pride, in spite of the devoted attention and bland manners of every other part of the royal family.

From day to day, as fête succeeded fête, and every demonstration of attachment was exhibited to lull suspicion and create confidence, the feelings of Queen Jeanne experienced a change, till at length, instead of beholding in this display the friendship which was professed, her doubts grew into strength, and her mind became a prey to terrors and regret which she could not overcome. Catherine's experience soon told her that she had overacted the part she had undertaken, and was suspected; but to no one did she breathe her thoughts except to her favourite and adviser Bianco, and many and secret were their conferences on the subject. His recommendation agreed with her policy, that the court should remove as soon as possible to Paris, where it would be easier to arrange their plans, by drawing more closely together all the great leaders of the Huguenot party, and leading them by sure degrees into a toil from which escape was impracticable.

Charles, whose mind was excited in a manner which bordered on delirium, by the stirring future which he pictured to himself, was restlessly desirous of removing from Blois to the scene of some glorious action, which he felt was on the eve of being accomplished. He therefore readily agreed to his mother's proposition, and preparations were instantly made to remove the court to the Louvre, where a series of entertainments was preparing superior to any which had yet been given, in honour of the approaching nuptials of Henry and Marguerite.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROTEGE.

Mine was a proud dejection, and an unquiet weariness, that is, sinking down the more by how much the more my pride aspired to raise me up.

ST. AUGUSTIN.

The young orphan whom Jeanne of Navarre had mentioned to King Charles as being under her protection, and whom she had lately sent to Paris, was called Claude Emars. His child-hood had been passed at the simple court of Navarre, which in its habits resembled the private society of a country gentleman, without state or formality, rather than that of a monarch, who by hereditary right might one day wear the crown of France. Only a few years older than the young prince, Claude had been chosen by Jeanne as one of his companions, and in all the daring adventures in which Henry delighted to engage he was at his side. To both, the haunts of the eagle and the bear were known,

and neither shrank from the ravine or the torrent which must be passed in order to pursue their mountain sport. The noble and generoushearted Prince was beloved by all his associates, and he had frequently distinguished Claude from the rest, not only on account of the resolution and bravery he displayed on all occasions, but because there hung over his birth an obscurity which excited his compassion and sympathy.

A few years before the events occurred with which this narrative opens, Claude Emars entered the college of Navarre, and, his studies concluded, his kind protectress had arranged that he should become secretary to the President of the Chamber of Accounts.

It was with feelings of delight, such as youth alone experiences, that Claude one morning received a summons from Madame Mabille Rolland, the King's nurse, the only person who in the great city of Paris had any interest in him, and whose motherly attentions while he had been at college had attached him to her with tender gratitude. On his way to the apartments which were allotted to her in the palace of the Louvre, as he passed along the crowded streets, gay with preparation for approaching festivities, he was lost in admiration of everything he saw.

Having but rarely quitted his studious abode since he first left the mountains which had become native to him, every object that met his view appeared fraught with wonder and beauty He paused frequently on his way to gaze on the sumptuous buildings which the magic wands of Delorme and Brillant had called into being, and was greatly struck with the extent of the enormous structure of the arsenal, then newly completed: but his admiration was at its height when he reached the magnificent pile of the Louvre, rising in gorgeous majesty beside the river, whose tide proudly reflected its towers. The lately erected palace of the Tuileries, on which the Queen Mother had bestowed so much care and pains, and where she now feared to reside in consequence of a prophecy which threatened danger to her from St. Germain, in which parish it was situated, excited his amazement at so much cost and splendour.

By degrees, as he became accustomed to the brilliant scene, his thoughts, hitherto absorbed in wondering admiration, were led into a train of sad reflection as they fell back upon himself; and when he stopped at the door of Mabille's apartments his eyes were filled with tears.

the was instantly struck with the difference in his demeanour from what she had been

accustomed to observe, and with the quick apprehension of affectionate regard, questioned him as to the cause of his evident depression.

"I fear I am selfish, dear Mabille," said he, "that instead of my heart bounding with joy and delight at all the splendour I behold, I am thinking of myself. What am I in this pageant of the world?—an orphan—a nameless and insignificant being, ignorant of myself and of my birth; a worthless atom in the great scale!"

"Claude," said Mabille gravely but kindly. "you speak inconsiderately: no one is worthless in the eyes of heaven; the accident of birth does not always secure distinction; and we have all much more to be grateful for than to repine at in our destiny. You are protected by a generous and good princess; you have open before you a career of learning, - perhaps of fame. You have youth, health, and hitherto have shown a spirit which could not be easily quelled. I am not, however, sorry to find that all the vanity which you see around you inspires you with serious reflections: it should have taken another direction, and led you to think of how little moment is all the grandeur of the universe in His eyes who disposes of events. Would that the fate of all those of our religion were as secure as you may be in the insignificance which you deplore !"

" Mabille," answered Claude, suddenly shaking off the sadness which hung upon him, " I should indeed have thought of others,-of those to whom I am bound by every tie of gratitude and love. Tell me of the King and of good Queen Jeanne."

"You shall see them in a few moments," said Mabille, " for it is by the Queen herself that you are sent for; she desires me to confirm to you the appointment you expected of secretary to the President."

"Oh, my dear Mabille," replied Claude, again relapsing into melancholy, "think me not ungrateful while I conceal from you no part of my feelings. I had hoped to be permitted to embrace the career of arms, rather than to lead a life of quiet and inactivity. My heart has bounded with emotion when I have heard of glorious achievements performed by men younger than myself. It seems to me but mere existence, to plod for years in cities with the pen, when the sword might be employed in such a noble cause as ours."

"But, Claude," said the nurse, "remember that the sword is sheathed; -and heaven grant it may long be so!"

Their conversation was here interrupted by a summons to attend the Queen of Navarre, and Claude, in the delight of again beholding his benefactress, soon forgot everything beside. It was arranged by that considerate and indulgent princess that her young protégé should remain in her establishment till the period fixed for his admission to the family of the President Bailly, in order that he might be a witness of and partaker in all the gaieties which were now the sole occupation of the entire population of the pleasure-loving city of Paris.

CHAPTER V.

THE ACCIDENT.

I was requesting you to come no more

And mock me with your service. 'Tis not well.

BRAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Though it was always the policy of Catherine de Medicis to encourage every kind of amusement in the capital, and continual fêtes, even in the midst of the civil contests which raged without, enlivened the stately halls of the regal palace, yet at this moment mirth and gaiety seemed altogether to have taken up their abode in the brilliant city. Night after night. galas, public and private, made the air ring with music and festivity; the gardens were a perpetual illumination, and to be gloomy appeared the only crime in that happy place. The near approach of the nuptials which were to unite the contending parties in blissful accord, was the theme of all discourse, the object of all celebration; -the names of Henry and

Marguerite were sung in concert, and wreathed in garlands, wherever a voice or hand could be heard or employed. The grateful and well-pleased citizens, happy in the anticipation of tranquillity, readily contributed the sums levied upon them, and a general feeling of contentment seemed to pervade all classes.

It was on one of the most gorgeous of these festive entertainments that Claude found himself amongst the gay crowd in the gardens of the new palace of the Tuileries. The whole extent of the wide avenues was one blaze of rainbow light; gleaming from amidst orange and myrtle and pomegranate groves, were numerous groups of marble statues, selected by the refined taste of the Queen, and brought from her native Italy at great cost. Columns of sparkling water shot up in spiral lines towards the sky, and fell back with gentle murmurs into richly-carved basins, round which bloomed a profusion of the choicest flowers. Fireworks of rare beauty sent up their tongues and stars of flame far above the trees, and each burst was greeted by the delighted multitude with shouts of admiration. In different parts of the gardens were stationed concealed musicians, who attracted enthusiastic attention; and the feats of a party of rope-dancers were hailed

with the most rapturous applause. But while the vaulters were in the midst of their performance, a cry arose that a still greater attraction awaited the curious, for it was rumoured that the royal party from the Louvre were entering that part of the gardens which had been portioned off to enable them to walk in procession before the eyes of their gratified subjects. In a few moments the loud acclamations of "The King! the Queen! - the bride!" proclaimed that the eager wishes of the assembled multitude might be gratified by beholding all the regal hosts, with their distinguished guests, as they paced with stately steps along the alley of flowering shrubs which had been arranged for the display.

A burst of music, and a sudden discharge of fireworks, more brilliant than any which had preceded them, indicated the arrival of the party; and loud was the outcry, and violent the struggle to obtain situations most favourable for a view of the objects of so much curiosity. Some of the most anxious of the spectators mounted on scaffolds and stools piled on each other, while some earnest gazers clung to the depending branches of the trees, and raised themselves amongst the boughs. Claude had adopted the latter method, and was enjoy-

ing the sight of the splendid coruscations of fire that whirled above him, and blazed on the path of the jewelled party who were passing, when shrieks were uttered from amongst the crowd, and it was discovered that a large temporary building, representing the temple of Hymen, was on fire, and the flames were seen mounting above the trees, borne by the breeze amongst the multitude, threatening destruction to all within their reach. Great was the confusion which instantly prevailed; a rush was made by some towards, and by others from the spot, and screams and exclamations filled the air. Claude leaped from his exalted station, and, borne along by the crowd, was hurried he scarce knew whither, when he perceived a party of people surrounding the body of a man who lay extended on the ground, having been dragged from under a mingled mass of planks and fallen bodies: by his side knelt a young girl, whose gestures bespoke extreme terror; she was calling distractedly on her father, and entreating assistance from those around. But the confusion had by this time become appalling, and those who had assisted the fallen man were driven away by alarm, which magnified their own danger, and each new account added to the general panic. Terrified parties hurried here

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and there, searching for their relations and friends, and forgetful of the amusements which they had risked so much to share, whilst the cries of those who had been injured were heard above the exclamations of the flying. Claude, with much labour, succeeded in defending the young female and her apparently lifeless companion from the pressure of the crowd, and was nearly exhausted with exertion, when, having cleared a small space, he contrived to raise him in his arms, and calling to the daughter to cling closely to him, he bore along his senseless burthen to an open part of the gardens, and, laying him by the side of a fountain, proceeded, with the help of his young companion, to administer remedies for his relief.

At length, to the great joy of both, the injured man gave signs of recovery, and, heaving a deep sigh, half opened his eyes: the first words he uttered struck Claude with surprise, and he felt a shudder creep over him as these sentences were indistinctly articulated: "Down with the Huguenots!—leave none alive of the Infidel race!—give me the sword—never heed their cries—I am fallen, but even yet I have strength left to aid in exterminating the foes of religion!" Other words died away upon his lips, while his daughter, regardless of

all but the certainty that he still lived, embraced him with transport, and Claude began to consider of the best means of removing him.

"The litter in which we came to this unfortunate place," said the young lady, when her agitation would permit her to reply to his questions, "was to await us at the South gate of the gardens; but how shall we reach it, with my father in this state?"

"Have you courage to remain here with him while I seek it?" asked Claude.

"Oh, yes, yes," cried she; "go instantly, I entreat."

Claude was hurrying away, when he suddenly recollected that he was ignorant of the names of those whom he had assisted, and he returned to make so necessary an inquiry.

"The President Bailly," said the young lady; and Claude, with an exclamation of surprise, darted away towards the South gate.

Many amongst the crowd were still pressing to escape from the gardens; others, finding that the accident had been exaggerated, were returning to the scene of the late festivity in the more haste as they feared to have lost the sights for which they were so anxious, so that he was some time before he found it possible to reach the desired spot. As he was gazing round him

in much perplexity, he heard his name pronounced, and was accosted by one whom he had
frequently met of late during his short stay at
the hotel of the Queen of Navarre, and with
whom he had become well acquainted, for René
Bianco, the person in question, possessed accomplishments likely to attract a young and
ardent mind, and having been thrown into frequent contact with Claude, and having expressed great regard and admiration for his beloved
benefactress, always treating him with marked civility and friendliness, the young mountaineer could not refuse him his confidence and
intimacy.

Bianco was one of those persons who seem to possess a fascinating power without any moral virtue in their minds giving cause for the dominion which they exercise; on the contrary, there was an occasional hardihood in his sentiments, and a licence in his conversation, which at times startled the pure nature of Claude, and made him draw back from the offered friendship which he had been so ready to meet: he had always therefore experienced in his society a mixed feeling; he was amused by his wit and gaiety, pleased with his superior knowledge of the world, and his sarcasm and unexpected remarks on passing events, but he

was conscious, nevertheless, of a degree of mistrust, bordering on alarm, when he hooked in his face, and vainly endeavoured to catch the real meaning of his bright but wandering eye, or to explain the peculiar smile which curled around his well-formed mouth.

He could not help feeling gratified and flattered, that a person, standing in the position that René did, and enjoying the confidence of the Queen-mother, should take pains to conciliate his friendship. Yet, at times, the pride of the unfriended orphan rose against a certain familiarity which he imagined spoke of superiority: he banished, however, this impression as quickly as it was made, reproaching himself with ingratitude and misplaced reserve. All this, however, appeared unnoticed by René, who continued the same tone of civility, in whatever mood he might find his young acquaintance.

"What seek you so earnestly?" said Bianco, as he took the arm of Claude. "Methinks, in this confusion, it were hard to find any one except by chance, as I have you."

"I seek a litter belonging to the President Bailly," answered Claude; "he lies in the gardens dangerously hurt from this accident."

"St. Mary forbid!" exclaimed René, "you may look in vain for his litter; but we can

place him in one belonging to some of the Queen's ladies, which waits close at hand."

"A thousand thanks," replied Claude; "come with me and assist in bearing him thither, his daughter will be overjoyed."

"How!—is Alix with her father?" inquired the Italian, in a tone of anxiety.—"Let us not lose a moment."

They accordingly hastened on, and soon arrived at the fountain, where they found the President a little recovered, though unable to walk: they bore him between them to the litter, and his daughter followed with trembling steps. As he was placed carefully in the vehicle, René extended his hand to assist the young lady to ascend, and, for the first time, as the light fell on his face, she saw who offered her his support; she started and shrunk back.

"Is it you, Signor René?" faltered she. "Was it you who saved my father?"

Claude, in anxiety to place the wounded man at ease, heard not the answer given by René.

"I have been so fortunate," said he, in a low tone; "and if my assistance has any merit in the eyes of the lovely Mademoiselle Alix, I am indeed repaid."

"I thank you, Signor. We are most grateful," said Alix, as she threw herself into the

seat, and, overcome by the emotion she had experienced, burst into a passion of tears.

In a few minutes Claude saw the litter move off, accompanied by Bianco, and he could not but feel a momentary pang of disappointment, as he lost sight of those whom he had so materially served, without having exchanged with them a word of greeting.

He returned home, through the streets glittering with light and gay with illuminated garlands, and was entering the Rue de Grenelle, in which street, at the hotel of the Bishop of Chartres, the Queen of Navarre had resided since her arrival in Paris, when a poor woman thrust into his hand some pamphlets, at the same time entreating him to purchase them for the sake of the blessed virgin. He threw her a few pieces and hastened to his apartments, where, exhausted with the fatigue and agitation of the evening, he cast himself upon a couch. The singular manner of his meeting with the President, haunted his imagination, and he tried to form a less vague idea of his daughter. The occasional flashes of light which had fallen on her, had discovered to him a slight and graceful figure, and delicate and peculiarly small white hands; but the tresses of her long dark hair had fallen so entirely over her face, as she bent beside her father, that he had only imperfectly seen her countenance. He now vainly regretted having been so soon separated by the crowd from them. "However," he thought, "in a few days I am to be under the same roof with her, and my wish will be gratified. Bianco, it seems, is known to them. I will ask him to describe her to me minutely."

He was indulging in a variety of reveries, all tending to the same point, when a quick step in the corridor recalled him to himself, and the next moment the Italian entered. "I have seen the President and his daughter to their hotel," said he, "and now come to ascertain how fares their champion, as I return from an embassy to Queen Jeanne, from my Donna Catarina."

Claude instantly loaded him with inquiries, and heard in answer a description of Mademoiselle Alix, coloured with all the vividness of Italian painting. "Beware how you behold her, 'de la regarder vous gardez;' but above all beware how you love her," said René, "for I, myself, pretend to the honour of serving this divinity."

"Oh!" said Claude, "you jest; neither of us have a right to cast our eyes so high: the fair Alix would not condescend to regard me, a poor scretary, nor you, a rich perfumer."

This was said carelessly, without any of offending, but René bit his lip in motion, as he replied, "My friend, Careles not so me of my calling,—a dealer the favourite of such a mistres at the favourite of such a mistres at the family of equal rank with the family of equal ran

- "Well," said Claude, "I give you go the nyself, I have not so bright a coat."
- "Had you ever your native mining and which Highers.
- * Not that I have all assessed lines.
- " But I have," and the halos grows of all I myself have station the act."
- * You cannot need to be the young man.
- * Not consider it on " extrinsed below to extractions. "I look type it or a differenscience, difficult of extraction for made of any tail to become matter of."
- * If you make probability or make I was

"that delivered at the birth of your Queen Catherine, is scarcely pleasing to record, for it is said the stars threatened evil to the place where she should take up her abode."

"True," said René, in an absent tone, his mind evidently absorbed in the subject; "Basilio declared that she should be raised to the highest dignity the world can bestow."

"Ay, but he added," said Claude,—"for I heard it but yesterday discussed in the public streets, while the Queen was passing in her chariot,—that she would cause the ruin of the country, and of the house into which she married: but we, of Bearn, pay little attention to the dreams of astrology—had we done so, we should never have left our mountains, for many and great were the evils threatened to our good Queen, if she undertook this journey, which has turned out so happily for her and for France."

While he spoke, Bianco bent his head to conceal a lurking sneer, and busied himself in turning over the leaves of the pamphlets which Claude had received from the poor woman. "Ha!" cried he suddenly, "What have we here? some of the centuries of the great Michel Nostrodamus, the mathematician. I see, though you profess to despise the noble art, you sometimes amuse yourself with its revelations; and,

behold! is there not proof in the first page I take up of the truth of prophecy! Does he not expressly foretell the manner of King Henry the Second's death? ay, and here is the same predicted by Luc Gauric, who promised the King long life if he escaped the danger that threatened him in the sixty-third and sixty-fourth years of his age. Did not Jerome Cardin say the same, though none dared report it to his Majesty: besides the Jew, who warned him to beware of combat between man and man. My donna Catarina endeavoured to persuade him not to enter the lists, and to discontinue the jousts after the third day, but in vain."

"What became of the unfortunate Count de Montgomery?" asked Claude. "I heard that Queen Catherine could not forgive his unintentional crime."

"She will never forgive it," said Bianco; "he fled to England, where he was protected, and has since been in arms with your party, he is in Paris now." As he uttered the last words a gloom passed over the brow of René, and he was silent for a few moments.

Claude continued: "I hold all these predictions as mere visions, adapted but as the event occurs; otherwise they had been entirely forgotten, as they deserve to be." "But, how say you?" exclaimed his friend; "here is the prophecy of one of your own Huguenots." — He went on reading the title: "'Words uttered a Twelvemonth since by a Dying Man,'—'Peace is made suddenly, and in our favour: new alliances, treaties, and a marriage. She will go to Paris and die there. All the nobles will assemble. Events crowd on each other. Oh! what a change!—what treachery!—what cruelty!' By Heaven!" muttered René, drawing his dark brows close over his eyes,—"there is meaning in this."

"Why," said Claude, laughing, "I was just thinking there was none: who can find meaning in such raving?"

"Give me these papers," said Bianco, rising suddenly.

"Willingly," said Claude, "they are entirely useless to me, or to any one, I should imagine."

As he spoke Claude stooped to collect the pamphlets together, and was handing them to Bianco, when he was struck with the fixed look of intense interest with which he was regarding him.

"You have served, it seems, my young friend," said he; "or do the students at the college of Navarre amuse themselves with war after the fashion of those at St. Germain des Prés?"

"What mean you?" asked Claude with surprise.

"I allude," answered René, bringing his eye close to his listener's face, "to the broad scar which you bear on your forehead; how came

you by it?"

The tone in which the question was asked was so hollow and deep that Claude could not but remark it.—"What," said he, "are you one of those whom wounds affright? I should not have thought it. I never felt the pain of this, for I was an infant when I received it, from a ruffian who, no doubt, intended that the blow should be mortal."

"Strange!" said René; — "how did this happen?"

"Oh!" answered Claude sadly, "it is a melancholy story; when I first heard it I learnt I was an orphan,—my father was murdered by the same hand that aimed at my life."

"And did Anthony of Navarre adopt you then?" asked René, hurriedly.

"Oh, you have heard my history, I see," said

"Partially," answered the Italian, turning away, as Claude went on to relate some passages of his early life.

"This chain," he said, taking from his bosom

one which he wore, and kissing it, "is all that is left me of a father I never knew."

Bianco bent forward eagerly to examine it, and as he did so touched a spring which Claude had never perceived, and displayed beneath the clasp a wreath of gold flowers, within which was minutely engraved an altar, with the words "ardo y adoro," and the initials G. A. entwined. Claude uttered an exclamation of surprise, and Bianco, in some confusion, closed the clasp. "All these chains have a secret spring." he said; "I am surprised that you never found this before. But," he added hastily, "in the extreme interest I take in your history I am forgetting my duty. Queen Catherine will be asking for me. Adieu, therefore, my dear Claude, and be not depressed; the time is coming for great events, and in them, depend on it, fortune will not forget you." With these words he quitted the chamber, leaving his companion full of thought and a prey to anxious musings.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MIRROR.

Come like shadows-so depart.

Macbeth.

WHEN Catherine de Medicis found herself a widow, and her son Francis II. king, she objected to remain in the palace of the Louvre, where her state and dignity were in some degree eclipsed by that of the reigning monarch. The Château des Tournelles had been destined to demolition, and it was therefore necessary that a new palace should be constructed for the residence of the Queen-mother. She chose as a site a house called Les Tuileries, situated at that time out of Paris, which Francis the First had bought to present to his mother. Its situation by the river, and the great space of garden-ground attached to it, made it a desirable spot, and, enchanted with her acquisition, all the taste and genius of the Queen were put into action to render it as magnificent as possible. The first architects were employedmoney was raised without hesitation; and a design, exquisite and unique, was made, which would have secured to her one of the grandest and best constructed palaces in France. Already the grand front, which still exists, towards the gardens, had risen in all its splendour -dome after dome, and arcade after arcade,galleries and chambers, halls and staircases were built, and the facade was terminated by two pavilions, since greatly changed and al-Nothing could exceed the beauty of tered. the building as far as it had been completed, and Catherine looked forward to the continuation of the design which was to render her palace perfect when on a sudden a great change took place. The works were stopped, all the bustle, anxiety, eagerness which had been evinced ceased in an instant: every one was astonished, - the king, the court, the people, asked themselves why, after all the heavy expense incurred, after all the pleasure the Queen had taken in the superintendence, after the great success which had attended the accomplishment of her desire, a blank silence should have come over all: -total calm, where all before was animation.

Just at the moment when the last touch had

been given to the new palace by the masterhand, the recollection that the edifice stood in the purish of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois condemned it at once; for it had been predicted by a famous astrologer, that Catherine de Medicis should meet her death in connexion with St. Germain!

Too late had the fatal fact been discovered; but it was enough:—in vain all the beauty, the splendour, the charms it exhibited,—they were objects in future of nothing but aversion and terror; and this otherwise undaunted, enlightened, firm, and unshrinking woman, was subdued, appalled, and driven at once from the Eden which she was about to create.

What was to be done? Every hour she should spend in this dangerous place would be fraught with agony; every stone in the fabric would threaten her with destruction. It could not be thought of; another palace must be provided for her residence, and this fatal spot must only be retained for state.

The Hotel d'Albret was purchased, six other houses, and two immense gardens; but this was not enough for the vast imagination of the disappointed Queen, who resolved to put no limits to her extravagance at a moment when the finances of France were in a state of exhaustion, and every consideration of prudence called for the strictest economy. Accordingly, the sum of two thousand gold crowns which had been paid by the nuns who belonged to the establishment of Les Filles Penitentes for their convent, was greatly added to in their demand, which met with no opposition, the abbey of St. Magloire received these sisters, and Queen Catherine was in possession of their domicile. All the gardens and streets in the neighbourhood were next to be secured, and her indomitable will procured every acre of ground which her eye fastened upon.

The same architect who had before assisted her with his genius was now called upon again, and the new palace promised to equal in magnificence the former; gardens adorned with statues and fountains extended in beautiful symmetry around the building; and in a lateral court, having a secret communication with the private apartments of the Queen-mother, rose an elevated Doric column, crowned with turrets and an observatory.

This pillar, which outwardly appeared only ornamental, concealed a spiral staircase, destined to conduct the steps of the royal searcher into futurity to a small chamber at the summit, where her midnight lamp might often be seen glimmering by the shuddering inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who crossed themselves, and prayed that no evil influence might descend upon them from that fearful and mysterious elevation.

On the fluted shafts of this column were to be seen crowns, fleurs-de-lis, horns of abundance, broken mirrors, and torn nets dragged by weeping Cupids, emblematical allusions to the widowed state of the Queen: while here and there, covering the niches, appeared interlaced the initial letters H and C, which under her direction were so placed, though if the pillar had been erected by the husband she deplored, he would probably have directed that the D should occupy the position she assigned to her own initial. The upper part of this building was of wrought iron, and its dome presented the form of a sphere covered with circles and half-circles interlaced, such as are not used by astronomers, but well known to those deep in the secrets of a science somewhat connected with it, then universally believed in and followed.

It was in a small chamber beneath this dome that the Queen-mother was seated alone, after having retired from the gaieties with which she loaded her guests. Here she felt that intru-

sion was impossible: that here she might allow full scope to the workings of her mind, here, even as her tower commanded Paris, could she command the destinies of its inhabitants and mature her plans of policy and ambition.

The roof was low, its form was octagon, and it was faintly lighted by two extremely narrow pointed windows, from which a wide extent of buildings could be discerned on either side; a small staircase led from the chamber to the platform above, which, open on all sides, was covered by the dome before mentioned, supported by slender pillars.

The cornices were moulded into forms of great beauty: amidst garlands of grapes, ivy, and fruits, birds, and other small animals were introduced in the manner of an earlier age, and heads of chimeras terminated the projecting edges and pendants. In the centre stood a large table of carved wood, whose supports represented grotesque figures; on this was placed a candelabrum of wrought iron of peculiar construction, from the middle of which rose a large double crucifix; round this were arranged numerous small wax lights, and beneath them were placed tablets of polished wood engraved with astronomical characters, and records of historical dates. Two carved chairs answered

to the ornaments of the table, and seemed to indicate that only one guest at a time was admitted into this mysterious apartment. A book of "Heures" lay beside the chandelier, and the light that fell on it displayed its elaborate binding, encrusted with figures representing scenes of human life, minutely executed, and the same subject continued even on the small iron clasps which confined the exquisitely printed pages from the hand of the celebrated Simon Vostre; near this lay a thin volume bound in gilded copper: it was open, and within might be seen figures which spoke a mysterious language, and presented the horoscopes of several personages; -in fact, it was evidently a manual of astrology, and had been recently studied with attention. Opposite to the windows depended from the wall a mirror of Venetian manufacture in an ebony frame, also curiously sculptured, and beneath it hung a large enamelled watch with four dials.

The Queen was dressed in the black robes always worn by widows, and which, as if in contempt of all the grandeur which surrounded her, she had retained from the time of her husband's death. Her hair was concealed beneath the angular white cap of the period, and a grey gauze veil, partly shaded her features, which

were harsh and strongly marked, with but little appearance of former beauty. Her eyebrows were powerful and dark, and the shadows round her eyes so deep, that, large as the eyes were, they gave additional size and rendered them still more brilliant, although no aid seemed necessary to increase the lustre, which, when animated, they emitted. The whites of these peculiar orbs were very visible, in which they appeared to float, giving an expression of restless severity to her countenance. Her nose was slightly bent, and her wide and expressive mouth displayed teeth, large, even, and well set, contrasting by their whiteness the sallow complexion of her face. Her figure was tall and large, her movements full of grace and majesty, and an air of command was visible in her slightest gesture. Where her design was to persuade, her voice could be soft and musical, but its ordinary tone was deep, hoarse, and startling.

She had been poring over the cabalistic characters of her astrological book for some time, but her eyes were now frequently turned from her study, to the door of her chamber, or rather, to a panel, covered with tapestry, which fitted into the wall, and opened by a secret spring, known only to herself. Her foot beat restlessly against the floor, as she turned over

the mysterious leaves, as though she was impatient at the difficulty of comprehending some passage: at length, she rose, and approaching one of the narrow windows, in a pane of which, was emblazoned the arms of France, on a shield, she looked out upon the moonlight scene beneath. Slumbering Paris lay stretched before her: the crowded roofs and lofty spires of the great capital were all touched by the silver light, and the dark gulfs between the streets seemed like intersecting lines in the clear map. Over the tower rested a mass of dark clouds, which seemed to threaten a storm, but all besides was bright and calm.

"Sleeping, — silent," — she murmured —
"I, perhaps, of all this busy, stirring world of human beings, may be the only living thing awake, and watching, — for what! to study how to obtain that, for which my false stars told me I was born; but which seems to elude me, just when I imagine it within my grasp. Yet I was promised power, and I will be mistress of it,—it is the aim, the end of my existence. I have struggled, battled,—sinned for it,—one crime, more or less, can be of little moment—if it be indeed a crime to injure the enemies of religion!" She paused, and turned her glance towards the crucifix, as if she expected some demonstration of Heaven's approval, then

continued her soliloquy.- " Must I always have foes to contend with, who strive to baffle all my projects! - yet I have hitherto triumphed over them all. Of what avail was my imprisonment, and all the persecution I endured in infancy, when it became at last a question, whether the child, predicted to be a firebrand, should be cast upon the pikes of besieging soldiery,- my star prevailed, and the deserted, cloistered outcast, became Queen of France: vet, even then, an adverse influence pursued me, and my spirit was forced for years to bow before the widow of de Brézé - nay, I owed the very maintenance of my state to her, - and submitted to the thraldom! - her genius overmastered mine; - but I had youth, - she would have waned; but then he died - he died, - and how?" She clenched her teeth, and pressed her hands tightly together, as she exclaimed, "de Lorges!the only man I ever loved-by whom I was contemned! Henry fell by his hand, and even vet I am unavenged. Diana felt my power at last, but he has yet to know how bitter is my hatred and how resolute my vengeance. My sons all thwarted me, - I should have been a sovereign, - and a baby contrived to rule through others. The race of Lorraine crushed me. Henry should have succeeded, and not this

sickly Charles: but he will die, like his brother, disease is already wasting him, and to end his sufferings might be mercy. The Bourbon's pride must be checked in time, and the Guises awed, if possible, or secured. Yet," she added, stopping suddenly before the book she had been reading, " vet the star of Navarre rises in spite of everything. I cannot comprehend this contradiction -would that René were come -what can detain him?" She resumed her place at the window, then paced the chamber again, her steps heavy and slow, and her figure bowed as if by the weight of her thought. A low sound was heard without, which startled her, and she approached the tapestried panel, and listened; the sound was repeated, and she placed her hand on the spring; another moment, and Bianco had entered from the opening.

"I expected you," said Catherine, with a deep-drawn breath.

"Yes, madonna," answered the favourite,
there is reason that you should; there is reason for vigilance, or others may act more
promptly than ourselves. I have news of import."

"Speak," said Catherine, eagerly. "I am prepared."

"Be prepared," said René, speaking with the

familiarity, which, when alone he was accustomed to use with his royal mistress, "to act with decision. The cow of Navarre has been warned—emissaries go about the streets with prophecies, ready made, to influence and alarm her followers: see here, a packet of papers which I have found with one of her people! She feigns sickness, in order that the marriage should be postponed."

"That shall not be," exclaimed Catherine, pressing her blanched lips together, as she hastily perused the pamphlets which René spread before her. "Ha! the Huguenots are prophets too! so be it. What the stars decree shall be accomplished." She paused a moment, then hastily approached the Italian, and said solemnly. "René, do you remember the oath you took on that day when Anthony of Navarre denounced you as a murderer, and a word of mine saved you?"

Bianco met her piercing glance, unmoved. "Madonna," he said, "what need of this? I remember that oath for a twofold reason: first, I had had my revenge, and secondly, by your means, I escaped the penalty; and my gratitude induced me to swear to serve you in every way which my art or my genius could

suggest. Have you since had reason to doubt me, or do you now?"

"No," said the Queen, "I believe you are true; I believe, as you say, that your star and mine have sympathy with each other, and that we pursue the same objects. Now give me proof. I require of you a service of some danger, — nay, more than one act must secure my end,—you must not shrink from whatever I propose. The first," — she hesitated, — when the Italian, drawing nearer to her, whispered, in a tone, which, though scarcely audible, made her start,

"The first! is it not begun already? were those flowers carried daily, for nothing? You mean," he continued, fixing his snake-like eyes upon hers, "that Jeanne should die, and that I should find the means. The means are always in my power. I have, within myself, a spell which can draw the spirits of others towards me when I will it. I have but to make the sign, madonna, and you, yourself would feel its influence. Nay,—I have divined your secret thoughts; for there is sympathy between us, and I know what you desire. Yet are there influences which can render abortive the result of a life of study,—we must wait for the hour. Know,

madonna, that to me human life is of no more value, than is the skin of the snake which he has cast, than is the shell of the worm which he has quitted. Blood is to me the same as water, though I prefer avoiding it, for it tells tales. I have a surer method, which, when I use it, never can fail. You have already employed me; give me work again. When did I return and tell you of defeat?"

As he spoke, rapidly and earnestly the mind of Catherine seemed to undergo a fearful struggle. She looked into his face as if fascinated by his intense gaze: her eyes were dilated, her lips white, and her hands hung powerless by her side: he finished speaking, and removed from her the glance which rooted her to the spot. She shuddered—passed her hand across her eyes, and sank into a chair; while Bianco, taking a roll of parchment from his bosom, began to read it with attention.

"René," said the Queen, after she had a little recovered her self-possession, "have you discovered if Montgomery is in Paris?"

"I have," answered he, looking up. "I know his haunts, and have intercepted a letter which he wrote to Queen Jeanne, appointing an interview with her, at the masqued ball, at the

Tuileries. I let the information reach its destination, for my own reasons. He fears to visit her at her hotel, as spies may observe him; but he is safe now; he has a friend who will not again lose sight of him, and his disguise will avail him nothing."

"This is most prosperous," said Catherine, exultingly. "In Paris, in my own power! Oh! with what joy should I hear of his punishment overtaking him; what reward would be too great for him who accomplishes it! René," she continued, taking a sparkling ring from her finger, "wear this, to remind you of what is to be done."

"Thanks, madonna," said the Italian, "your interest is mine."

"And now tell me," whispered Catherine, does the great work prosper, or must I still linger in uncertainty?"

"It advances rapidly," replied her confidant.

"The planet Venus rises steadily towards the highest point of the heavens, and will soon fix over the head of her who is all powerful; but something still is wanting; we have had both blood and gold, but not enough."

" More gold you shall have," gasped Catherine. "And why not more blood?" rejoined René, with a sinister look. "There must be blood of infidels; the spirits must be propitiated."

"They shall," returned the Queen fiercely, "though whole oceans should be shed to gain them to my purpose."

" Madonna," said the adept, solemnly, "the time is coming when I can reveal to you what never vet has been told to mortal ears: the great elixir which sages have toiled for in vain for ages is all but within my grasp. I have heard the answer of the great demon. 'Whatever God hath revealed it is possible for man to become possessed of.' The infallible talisman of power can only be gained by him who first is master of the great treasure of nature, which for ever shines in the eyes of the learned, and is snatched away. Deny me, therefore, nothing; confide entirely in me alone, and I shall succeed: the mind of the searcher must be unruffled, his wishes must be granted, his earthly desires satisfied."

"Ask what you will," said Catherine with emotion; "the kingdom's wealth is yours, if I can obtain it."

"As yet," replied the master, "I know not what will be required. Great is my task, and mighty is my undertaking. I must conquer the

four points of knowledge, and become master of the four kingdoms, the mineral, vegetable, magical, and angelical. The first has the power of transmuting metals; that I have nearly attained !- the second discovers the nature of man and all kinds of animals, together with trees, plants, flowers, the art of producing and improving them, and contains the grand qualities of light and heat; the third teaches the language of brutes and all creatures, the art of divination and the knowledge of futurity; and, lastly, the angelical stone must be obtained. which is so subtle that it can be neither seen, felt, or weighed, but tasted only,-it contains within it the germ of eternity, and the key to all spiritual intercourse."

Biameo spoke with energy and enthusiasm, and so absorbed was be in the recapitulation of the parts of that wondrous knowledge after which he sought, that he seemed for the time insensible to outward objects, and rapt from himself. Catherine listened, as if on every word he spoke her fate depended, and watched his features, as they subsided into calmness, with deep emotion.

"And now, madonna," he said, "be content; your talisman will be mine to give after a mighty event has occurred, which the stars foretell as on the eve of accomplishment. Look," he added, pointing to the scroll he held, "behold this conjunction, and judge if we can fail. But to make assurance surer, cast your eyes on yonder mirror: it has before represented much that you have desired to know."

As he spoke, the lights in the candelabrum suddenly disappeared, and the chamber was in utter darkness, except from a small flame which flitted over the surface of the glass opposite, and disclosed confused groups of armed men, some carrying torches, some naked swords-beneath their feet they appeared to be treading their foes, and smiting them with their weapons -the assailants bore on their shoulders a white cross, and their hands were covered with blood. Catherine gazed with straining eyes and outstretched arms on the vision, which faded slowly away, and slowly and faintly the lights reappeared around the crucifix - but at that moment a bright flash was seen, and a tremendous burst of thunder echoed through the heavens, repeated gleams of blue lightning illumed the sky, and returning peals shook the tower to its foundation. Catherine stood transfixed with horror, but Bianco advanced unmoved to the window. A singular spectacle met his eye; the lightning was playing round the pane on which

the shield of France was emblazoned with the arms of Valois; one moment it was irradiated with brilliancy, and in the next every vestige of the arms had disappeared, leaving the shield an entire blank. Bianco turned away, and saw that the eyes of Catherine had followed his, and that she had beheld the phenomenon.

As suddenly as it had burst, the storm passed away, and in a few moments the heavens were clear, and the moonlight glittered as before on the roofs and spires of Paris. Without attempting to explain away the omen, without another word, the mysterious pair, with a sign to each other, quitted the apartment by the secret panel, and both sought their respective chambers, there to meditate, and plot, and devise new plans to counteract the influences which seemed warring against them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORD!

Elle avoit à vaincre en ce funeste jour Sa jeunesse, son cœur, un héros et l'amour.

VOLTAIRE.

EVERY gallery of the new palace of the Tuileries blazed with light; the gilded and painted compartments of the ceilings sent back a glow of rainbow richness; the marble halls, gorgeous with sculpture, exhibited treasures of art gathered from Italy by the hand of taste,-vases, busts, cabinets of curious workmanship, flowers, garlands, groves of aromatic plants, all combined in a crowd of splendour to dazzle the beholder, and make a scene of enchantment of the palace of which the Queen-mother had been the architect, if the modesty of Philibert de l'Orme had not done him injustice when he named it her entire work. Every portion of the splendidly decorated suite of apartments was filled to overflowing with fantastically dress-

ed groups, wearing costumes of all nations, and of every variety that fancy could suggest. Among the most distinguished was the train of the Princess Marguerite, who appeared as nymphs, dryads, fauns and sylvans, attendant on their Cynthia, and who executed dances of the most refined grace, to the admiration of all. Every name known to history or recorded in romance gave lustre to the scene; all of real or fanciful grandeur that could be collected thronged the gay place: chiefs of parties who had long contended through years of strife and anarchy here met in cheerfulness and abandonment. The illustrious leaders of the parties of Valois, Bourbon, Lorraine, and Guise, were mixed together in the dance, and paraded arm-in-arm along the glittering saloons: each seemed anxious to do honour to this re-union of interests, this oblivion of all animosities. Young Henry of Navarre enjoyed the moment with all the frank reliance of an innocent heart; his gentle sister cast off her timidity, and shared with him in the delights and glories round them. The pensive cheek of Queen Jeanne was flushed with a glow of pleasure as she observed their satisfaction, and hope once more sprang in her heart as she saw her son lead forward the beautiful, and now smiling bride elect, with whom he performed a dance, then much in vogue, called La Pavanne d'Espagne, in whose slow and graceful movements the Princess had the reputation of excelling all the ladies of the Court, and in which Henry appeared to much advantage, while the fascinations of his partner were displayed to the utmost. It was true that the soft expression of Marguerite's features as she looked on her partner, was caused by the evident admiration she excited, and by no feeling beyond that of gratified vanity: but it sufficed for the time, that the cold frown which she had worn since her appearance at Court had passed away, and her part in the pageant was acted to perfection. The Queen Mother's brow was also unclouded; and nothing could exceed the charm with which she welcomed her guests, and excited and joined in the gaiety of the hour.

The Princess afterwards stepped with her brother of Anjou a pazzameno d'Italie, for which both were celebrated; and after a period, when the principal ballets and grand dances were concluded, all ceremony appeared at an end, and every one assumed a mask; while many, anxious to increase their enjoyment by introducing mystery, retired to alter their cos-

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tume, and to carry on a series of amusing deceptions, which constitute the life of this sort of entertainment. By degrees, scarcely one of the original characters were to be recognised, and numerous were the jests and gay the sallies heard in every part of the spacious halls. The gardens were equally or more attractive; and there, in bowers of fragrance, were met groups and pairs earnest in their pursuit of amusement, and eager to enjoy the transient glories of their butterfly existence.

Among so many it was not difficult to escape notice, and there were not wanting meetings of more importance than the scene seemed to imply, and conferences more serious than the trappings of pleasure round would appear to cover. In a part of the gardens where the shade was the deepest, were two figures in close conversation. The one, apparently a female, was seated, covered with a long dark veil, which concealed her features; beside her stood a knight in black armour, who wore on his shield, of the same colour, the motto, without device, "No ay figura por mi dolor."

"Madam," said the mysterious figure, "be warned while there is yet time. I have ventured into the very den of the dragon, in the hope of saving you and yours. There is no

truth in your enemies; there is no trust in Queen Catherine; she has laid a scheme to entrap us all. I cannot discover to what it tends, but that there is treachery no doubt remains. Charles has been heard to utter words of fearful moment; I know it from his nurse, who seldom quits him, that his sleep betrays designs he dare not breathe when waking. Leave Paris before it is too late; assemble your people, and begone."

"But, my dear anxious friend, — friend as I know you to be to my lost husband and his children," answered the female, "how can I recede now? Is not the hand of Marguerite almost in Henry's possession?—is not everything prepared? I own I doubted,—nay, but this very day I half resolved to break it off, to call my people together, and retire to our mountains, leaving the house of Valois to their ambition. But my honour is engaged; my word is given. It would be base to fly, and prove to them how small our confidence in all their apparent friendship, which, after all, I cannot believe is feigned."

"Madam," said the mask, "your word was pledged to Anthony of Navarre never to trust this woman. She has betrayed all who relied on her. She is vindictive, cruel, unforgiving, and remorseless. For a crime which she knows to have been involuntary, has she not persecuted me to the verge of destruction—has she not vowed eternal hatred to me and my innocent race?—did she not destroy my wife and child?—oh God! even at this distance of time the thought unnerves me! Another has long replaced my murdered Agnes; many other sons have since blest me, but my tears are never dry for those she made her victims.—Enough of my own sorrows. It is for you, madam, for the children of my beloved friend, I plead. I warn you to beware—to fly if possible, and all may yet be well."

"Montgomery," said Queen Jeanne, for it was that unfortunate and devoted mother, "I fear it is too late. Would that one victim would suffice! might but my children escape! Go to Henry; strive to impress him with the danger of the moment. I will myself seek him, and endeavour to act for the best. As soon as you have spoken to him, I entreat you to leave this place, fraught with danger to you. Oh let not my imprudence be fatal to all my friends! Let me know that he whom my husband cherished as a brother has not sealed his friendship to our cause with blood."

Their conference was here hastily put an

end to by the appearance of a gay party, who were approaching the shaded alley where they were concealed, and separating instantly, they left the way clear to a group, whose disguises were sufficiently slight to allow the quick eye of gallantry or affection to discover the object The beautiful Marie de Cleves was led into the bower which the Queen of Navarre had just quitted, by a cavalier in the dress of an astrologer, whose undisguised voice told her that her admirer, the Duke of Anjou, was addressing words of meaning, but little mysterious, to her ear. The Princess Marguerite followed, and as quickly divined that the gay troubadour, who was entertaining her with a thousand compliments, and tender complaints was no other than the Duke de Guise, who had, it was known, long worn her chains.

"Oh, good astrologer," said the minstrel in a piteous accent, "exert your art, and let your predictions soften the heart of the most cruel beauty who ever caused the misery of a son of song."

"How is this, lady?" said the astrologer, taking the hand of the Princess: "the lines of this palm tell a different tale; there is no cruelty, no harshness here. Be satisfied, gentle minstrel; she is to be won by song, and the don d'amoureux merci will not be long withheld from him whose voice can second his heart."

Marguerite laughed, and turning to the troubadour, promised him her hand in the next dance as an earnest of her mercy.

"But come," said she, "you must tell this fair shepherdess her destiny, O learned sage; methinks there are few who can so well read her heart."

"This lady," said the Duke d'Anjou, taking the small shrinking hand of Marie in his own, is not destined to be the bride of him who seeks her; her star is higher—it burns brighter. There is another heart more worthy of her; and a crown is hovering over her brow, which fate compels her to wear.—Oh!" he whispered, beloved Marie, wilt thou reject it? wilt thou—canst thou play with my true affection?—cast from thee a love which is pure and sacred as Heaven itself, and give thyself to a peevish boy, who knows not thy value—who is worthless of thy divine perfection?"

"Alas!" answered the trembling and innocent Marie, "what shall I say, my lord; they force me to this marriage. I have no choice. My heart is very sad, nor have I skill to conceal its weakness." "Adored Marie!" returned the Prince aloud, for he perceived that they were now alone, "conceal nothing from me; my frankness equals your own. I know no form, no ceremony; I have no fitting words in which to tell how much—how tenderly I love you: all I can say is, that my heart and soul are yours, and that I will never resign you to another while I have life."

Terrified at his vehemence, though secretly delighted at an avowal to which her heart responded, the blushing girl sank upon a seat, unable to repress her tears, when both were startled by a voice near them, which uttered in a hollow tone one word which thrilled through the hearts of both; that word was "Death!"

The Princess uttered a shriek of horror, and fell fainting into the arms of Anjou; who, superstitious and credulous, like most of his race, and of the age in which he lived, hurried with tottering steps from the spot, bearing his lovely burthen with difficulty away. Having given her in charge to her female friends, he hastened to conceal his trepidation, and to remove his alarm, by joining the most boisterous parties he could find. But the fearful word rang in his ears, and at every pause in the music and

every cessation of laughter the knell seemed still audible to him. Nor was he the only one by whom that terrible monosyllable had been heard: the gay troubadour while whispering soft tales in the gratified ear of the beautiful and vain bride elect, had suddenly been stopped in his lay by the sound, and though Marguerite heard it not, the paleness of his face and the change in his demeanour sufficed to spoil the pleasure of the hour, and she soon quitted her altered lover for one whom the awful summons had not reached.

Henry of Navarre heard it as he sat amidst a group of young beauties, all of whom were striving, not in vain, to attract his notice and admiration: but he heeded it only for a moment, when he felt a shudder pass over him, which he shook off with difficulty, and then resumed the light conversation in which he was engaged. It came to Queen Jeanne, as she quitted the dark alley where she had parted with Montgomery; and the black knight heard it as he strove to win his way to the son of Anthony. While Henry was addressing some passing remark of a lively nature to the Admiral de Coligni, the latter heard the sound of that word close to his ear, and turned to see who spoke;

but there was no one near: and the attention of all was attracted instantly by the figure of a jester, who came dancing up to them, and with quaint gestures addressed each in turn with some joke, which elicited peals of laughter. At length he approached young Henry and the Prince of Condé, who stood in a group of their friends.

"Adieu, gossip!" said the antic figure, "I am going a journey to Navarre. Can I take your commands?"

"How;" answered Henry; "you show little wisdom to quit such a gay capital as this."

"You want me to stay to your wedding," returned the jester; "but methinks there are fools enough here already."

"But why do you leave us, is the question?"

"Because," said he in a whisper, "we are too much caressed here; this puts us off our guard. They pamper and feed us, while we crouch to them: the beating will come next. Farewell! I cannot relish these entertainments. I like black bread and liberty better than a gilded rod."

"Nay, stay with us, and show the wisdom of being content," said Condé.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

I know not how it is my heart stands back And meets not this man's love.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

The day on which Claude Emars entered on his new employment of secretary to the President Bailly, the Queen of Navarre was reported to be indisposed, and on the fourth day from the commencement of her illness that estimable princess was no more.

Consternation and grief took possession of the minds of the Protestant party. The agony of young Henry was extreme; and from the moment when he held in his arms the inanimate body of his beloved mother a settled gloom seemed to have taken the place of the buoyancy and cheerfulness which had hitherto distinguished him. The Queen's fever had come on rapidly on the morning after she had quitted the masked ball at the Tuileries; she was en-

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led her into the air; but her indisposition continuing to increase, she shortly after retired with her daughter to her own hotel, and the gay entertainment was soon at an end, having exhibited more than usual splendour and been carried on with more than usual hilarity and enjoyment.

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"Where is my Henry?" exclaimed the unfortunate patient,—"they have destroyed him!—no marriage—it is all a cheat, a scheme to ruin us all. Let us back to Navarre; there he may yet be safe. Ha! here is blood! Catherine—fiend!—it is my child's—my people's; but no, no—even yet he will triumph—your sons shall not reign—they shall fall one by one beneath the vengeance of outraged heaven!"

These, and other incoherent speeches, struck terror into the minds of her attendants, and confirmed in Henry awakened suspicion: as he listened to his mother's dying exclamations, and as he gazed in speechless grief on her pallid and livid form, strange doubts and horrid fears pressed on his brain. He quitted the beloved remains and his soul sickened at his coming nuptials, which this sad event had only delayed for a short time; he saw they were inevitable, and he saw too late that the toils were too closely wound round him to escape them.

Claude, on the loss of his benefactress, was overwhelmed with such deep grief that he secluded himself from all companionship but tears, and his natural sorrow was so far respected by the President as to prevent his being called upon to commence the duties of his office. Preparations, however, began to be made for the royal marriage, and Claude, by a violent effort, resolved to conquer his feelings and show himself worthy of the recommendation of his lamented patroness. The President himself, owing to the injuries he had received on the night when he was rescued by Claude, had not required his services, and some time had elapsed before the master and his new secretary met. When they did so, the depression of Claude's spirits prevented his alluding to the circumstances under which he had before seen him; but, had he even felt inclined to do so, the cold and almost forbidding manner of Bailly would have checked him at once.

The President was a man whose fine features bore the impress of high birth. His eyes were dark and bright, his hair slightly touched with grey, and his height and air commanding and dignified. There was nothing in his face or figure which could be objected to, but there was a chilling severity in his manner which forbade familiarity or confidence, and, except when conversing with his daughter, a smile never lighted up his features for a moment. That daughter Claude had not yet seen, and he began to fear that he should never have an opportunity of convincing himself of the reality of Bianco's glowing picture. Perhaps the melancholy state of his mind, leading him to pensive reflexion, caused his thoughts to dwell the more on the vague and shadowy form revealed to him for so short a time under circumstances so agitating; though his prudence told him it was a weakness, yet he could not control the imagination which brought before him the small fair hands, the bending figure, the long unbound hair, and he again heard the silver, sobbing tones of that peculiarly sweet voice which he felt sure he should recognise at any distance of time.

He was one day occupied with these musings, and mechanically going through the duties of his office, when Bailly rather abruptly entered the apartment, and in a hurried manner delivering to him some keys, informed him, that being hastily summoned to attend the King on business of importance he required his assistance, and desired him to follow to the palace in an hour with papers, which would be found in a cabinet in the apartments of his daughter, to whom he was to take the keys and receive them from her hands; he departed in haste, leaving Claude in some agitation. "The moment," he thought, "is now come, and an opportunity offers for putting an end to my suspense and ascertaining whether the memory of the daughter is as treacherous as that of the father appears to be." Almost unconsciously he proceeded to execute his commission, but when he reached the door leading to the suite of rooms occupied by Mademoiselle Alix he paused, and his heart beat violently. It appeared to him that the fate of his future life hung on that moment, that the simple opening of that door would decide it, and he hesitated to unclose the mysterious veil of his hidden destiny; he strove to calm his increasing emotion, and advanced, when again his step was arrested by the sound of a lute, accompanied by one of the softest voices he had ever heard, but which seemed familiar to his ear as though he had heard it from infancy. The words of the song were those of a poem written by one of the numerous imitators of the great and favourite poet of the day, and the air breathed the very soul of sadness. The lines were supposed to be addressed by the bard to the lovely Mary Stuart on her departure from France.

Gone is the sun—and beauty fled!

Thou flow'r, that blossomed in its ray,
Where shalt thou turn thy languid head,
And, sighing, look for parted day?
Ah! wither where thy gaze begun—
Thy hour is past—gone is the sun!

Ye crimson bells, upon whose leaves
Are stampt the words that speak of woe;
Whose urn the falling dew receives
That bids each cup with grief o'erflow;
Ye buds, that happy lovers shun,
Form ye my wreath—gone is the sun!

The song ceased, yet he lingered at the threshold; the notes still vibrated on his ear, and he feared to break the spell which their sweetness flung round his heart.

The President's daughter stood near a window; her back was towards him as he entered, and, as she hung over her lute in a bending attitude, her long dark hair falling over her face and neck, Claude was forcibly struck with the similarity of her present appearance to that on the evening when he had so imperfectly seen her. She turned suddenly on hearing his step, and started, with a slight exclamation, while her brow became flushed with crimson. "Surely," she said, in a faltering voice, "I was not

deceived; you come to—." She hesitated, and Claude, whose confusion equalled her own, so much was he impressed with the extreme love-liness he beheld, as he looked in admiration on the soft features and brilliant eyes which were turned towards him, hastened to say—

"I come, madam, from your father."

"He is then convinced," interrupted she, that Signor Bianco has falsely informed us, and that it is not to him we owe so deep an obligation?"

"Pardon me!" said Claude, blushing with emotion, — "my business from the President merely relates to some papers which he desired me, his secretary, to request you to deliver."

Alix looked more embarrassed than before; and, taking the keys from Claude, left the room in order to execute her father's commands, without adding a word.

When he found himself alone, Claude, recovering from his confusion, reproached himself for the coldness of his answer to her animated question. "Why should I hesitate," considered he, "to ask her meaning, or to avow myself her protector on that night of danger? Yet her father did not recognise me, and the service merits not that Alix should feel she owes me an obligation. Can it be possible that she does

remember me? René perhaps, to gain her favour, has attributed to himself the assistance I gave. Surely he did but jest!—he dare not really pretend to her. How very fair she is!—what soft dark eyes!—how unlike her father's!"

He was still musing thus when Alix returned, and presenting to him the packet, with a slight inclination, but keeping her eyes on the ground, was retiring, when Claude, resolving to conquer his ill-timed timidity, ventured to speak.

"May I be pardoned, madam," said he, "if I request to know the reason of the question which you but now did me the honour of addressing to me?"

Alix replied rather coldly,—"It arose from error.—I thought I had recognised in you a friend to whom my father was indebted for services which—but I was wrong, and—"

"If the slight assistance I was so fortunate as to render the President on the night of a recent fête in the gardens of the Queen's palace is that to which you allude, madam," said Claude, restored to confidence by her almost haughty manner, "I am much favoured by its retaining a place in your memory."

Alix cast on him the same look of grateful surprise which her countenance had worn on his first entrance. "There is some extraordinary mystery in this!" she exclaimed; "I thought I could not be mistaken in your features, though seen so partially, and your voice confirmed my belief; pray inform me by what chance Signor René became our conductor home? I have reasons for the inquiry."

Claude hastened to relate all the circumstances of the accident, his meeting with René, and subsequent separation from the party by the pressure of the crowd.

"It is very strange," said Alix; "Bianco assured us it was he who was our deliverer from that peril; and though I could not but tell him it appeared to me an entire stranger who came to our rescue, he persisted in his story. I know not how to atone for our apparent ingratitude to you!"

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed Claude, "I blush to have recalled to your memory a circumstance so little worthy of such attention as you bestow on it. It was my fear of having offended by the boldness of my question, which caused me to do so."

Alix reiterated her thanks, and Claude took his leave with a throbbing heart. He was hurrying along the gallery, half afraid of having overstaid his hour, for it appeared to him as if a whole life had been crowded into that short space of time, and that the confidence which had grown out of the mystery explained, had thrown down at once the barrier of ceremony which made the President's beautiful daughter and himself strangers,—when he was accosted by Madame Mabille. After an affectionate greeting she inquired whither he was hastening with such anxiety.

"I go, good dame Mabille," said he, "to the palace, and bear these papers to the President."

"Ay," answered she, "he is closeted with the Queen-mother: I met him as I came from the Louvre with one whom I ever dread to behold, and it is well thought of, my dear Claude," continued she earnestly,-"he to whom I allude is René Bianco, the Queen's perfumer: he seeks you much of late,-let me caution you against encouraging his friendship: there are strange rumours concerning his essences and pomanders, which are said to be less innocent than they should be. Beware of him!" she added in a low voice, pressing her finger on her lip.- "I know him, though he imagines years have effaced his features from my memory; and, believe me, all we of Navarre have reason to fear the favourite of the Queen."

"Kind Mabille," answered Claude, "I thank you for your caution, although it is unneces-

sary, for almost without being able to assign a good reason, I like not Bianco,—he becomes less agreeable to me as I know him more intimately. It has often surprised me to observe his ascendancy at court, and that those bow to him before whom others tremble."

"He possesses," said Mabille, "talents of no mean order; and, at court, the power of amusing and of being useful are prized, not honesty and principle. He is skilled in music, - which has a spell with these Italians, - and, above all, he is said to be an able chemist, and is reported to be an adept in the properties of dangerous drugs and minerals. It is known that he wears a glass mask when in his laboratory :- his charms are potent, nor, rumour says, does his conscience stand in the way of his preferment when the Queen's service calls for the exertion of his knowledge. What, tell me, has a perfumer to do with these secrets? Accept nothing from him, his gifts are fatal,and so are Catherine's, for they are prepared by him. Had our beloved Queen been warned in time she had never worn those perfumed gloves, which pleased her eye so much by their fatal embroidery, nor those nosegays which René has brought so much into fashion of late. Alas! they were sent her by her deadliest foe !"

"Surely, Mabille!" exclaimed Claude, turning pale, "you cannot suspect—"

"No;" said Mabille impressively, "I am but too certain. But go, my dear child; heaven guards the unwary."

As she spoke she released his arm, which she had held to detain him, and with much perturbation in her step withdrew.

Mabille had from her very early years been attached to the daughter of the President: for having felt great affection for her mother, who died when she was quite a child, all her regard was transferred to Alix, whom she had seen born. The Queen-mother, on the birth of her son Charles, had availed herself of Mabille's skill and management: at that time she had not long been married to a respectable goldsmith at Paris, who had dealings with the court, and as the Queen of Navarre had strongly recommended her countrywoman, and the young prince's weak constitution required constant care, Catherine overlooked the circumstance of her being a Protestant, and was besides not sorry to entrust her child to one in whose integrity she could rely more fully than on the intriguing menials who surrounded her. Beyond this, however, she had never liked Mabille, and would long since have got rid of her

but that the attachment of Charles to his nurse had become a passion, and he exhibited for her an affection of which his sullen and wayward nature hardly appeared susceptible. During the frequent fits of sickness to which he was subject, and the vexations to which his peevish and irritable temper exposed him, her patience and kindness were his only relief and consolation, and he flew to her in all his moments of measiness and pain, with a certainty of meeting with sympathy and indulgence. In consequence of the estimation in which she was held by the King, Mabille was treated by all the household with marked respect and consideration, and from her valuable qualities, and the power she possessed over her tyrannical master, enabling her to assist many who had fallen under his displeasure, was a general favourite.

There was a tie between the mother of Alix and Mabille which had drawn them closely together; this was the powerful one of religion, and the nurse was made a confidant of a secret which the wife of the President carefully concealed from him, as she feared his violent nature would burst forth if he but suspected her conversion, bigoted as he was to the Catholic faith, and strenuously opposing all the new doctrines. Alix had been instructed, how-

ever, in the faith which her mother had adopted; and on her premature death, to Mabille had been consigned the task of supporting her in it under the trials which she had to undergo, as her courage had not yet been equal to the undertaking of communicating to Bailly what would be so distasteful to him.

As Claude resumed his way to the palace, the nurse proceeded to the apartments of Alix. As she opened the door of her chamber, she observed her weeping. "My child," said the kind-hearted woman, "what distresses you? what mean these tears?"

"Good mother," replied Alix, embracing her,
"I rejoice that you are arrived. I am much
annoyed as well as surprised at something
which has just occurred. Bianco has deceived
us, as I told you I suspected, and it is to my
father's new secretary that we were indebted
for our rescue."

"To Claude Emars?" exclaimed Mabille.

"I know not his name," answered Alix.

"But he has just been here on business for my father, and from him I have discovered the truth." She then recounted the facts which she had learnt from Claude.

"Alix," said Mabille, when she had concluded, "I like not this transaction. René has some deep end in view, and his schemes I know are to be dreaded: now it is evident why the President has of late so much delighted in his society."

"Not altogether, Mabille," said Alix: "before this event my father allowed his offers of friendship, and received him as an equal. I have long been mortified to observe how his pride has descended, though, for my own part, I never saw any merit in Bianco which should make me forget the difference in our stations."

"My child," said Mabille, "René is of low birth and mean calling; but he is the favourite, the counsellor, the constant companion of Queen Catherine: the nobles pay him homage, the King himself endures his familiarities. He expects to be regarded by every one as an equal; and his insolence is not only licensed, but encouraged by his mistress. Alas! he is a dangerous and evil character, and while he cannot be trusted, must not be offended."

"Mabille," faltered Alix, turning pale as she spoke, "I have a strange thought which torments me; and yet it is so absurdly improbable, that I shame to mention it. It has struck me that this man presumes to aspire to my regard, and, what is worse, that my father does not frown on his pretensions. Your experience can

better judge: tell me, dear Mabille, do you think it — yes, you do, you must think it impossible!"

"Alix," said Mabille, solemnly, "I fear it is too true."

"Oh!" cried the terrified girl, as she heard the confirmation of her fears, "say not so; my father could never forget my birth, his honour so far,—would never sacrifice his only child to such a being as this Bianco; the mere sight of whom inspires me with feelings of dread and disgust, such as I never before experienced!"

"And with reason," returned the nurse. "His aspect is like that of the snake: beautiful to look upon in its exterior, but deadly and hideous within. Listen, Alix, to my surmise, and judge if I can enter into your repugnance to this man. When first I knew your dear mother, I was a happy wife: my husband followed the calling of a goldsmith, and possessed his art in a manner almost unrivalled. His workmanship was looked upon as superior to that of most artists of the day, and his business was flourishing. He was, as you know, a Lutheran like myself; but though at that time the laws were very severe against us, he was so much respected and upheld by the nobles, that we had little

meson to complain of injustice. There was a men in the same profession as my husband, who was also a good workman, but of an envious and malicious disposition. He was called Rassanges.—a name which became afterwards sufficiently notorious; but at the time of which I speak, he lived quietly enough in Paris. His talents might have caused him to be distinguished, but his habits of dissipation and idleness kept him always poor. One of his companions was an Italian, known as Florio, who had a peculiar genius for music, and played with exquisite taste on the guitar. This man, whose character was much suspected, had a on, whom he had apprenticed to Russanges to learn his trade, having obtained assistance from the Queen-mother, to whose presence he vas occasionally admitted, as she delighted to hear his songs, and always favoured her countymen. A murder and robbery was, however, committed in Paris, and suspicion was strong upon the Italian. He escaped, - as it was thought, favoured by the court party,—and left his son with our neighbour the goldsmith, who soon began to grow tired of his charge; and, his embarrassments increasing, he treated the boy very harshly and cruelly, so that my husband, who had a kind and generous heart, could

not bear to see him thus ill-used, and proposed to relieve Russanges of his burthen, and make him useful in his own house. To this the other agreed, and young Florio was transferred to us. He was then about fourteen, and a handsome, clever lad; but as idle as his late master, and with all the bad propensities, as well as the talents, of his father. He lived with us some time; and we hoped to be able to teach him respectable habits, as well as his business; but in vain: and though before he was always complaining of the cruelty of his former master, yet now he was continually visiting him, and consorting with the bad characters who were there in the habit of congregating. We soon found that the object of these meetings was to discover and denounce the Protestants as conspirators and rebels, and fearful was the injury which these worthless persons did to those of our religion. Everywhere they were betrayed, and accused, and persecuted: their houses pillaged, their persons ill-treated, and neither law nor justice allowed them. The streets were scarcely passable for the cart-loads of furniture unremoved, which had been taken from the houses of these unfortunate and innocent persons, and it appeared as if the sufferings of our people had reached the height:

though a few years after the same scenes were renewed with still greater fury. The ungrateful boy, whom we had protected, having been one day reprimanded for ill conduct, hastened to his associates, and through his means we were denounced as heretics and traitors. A band of robbers, with the sanction of justice, attacked our house, and pillaged it; and it was with difficulty that I escaped to throw myself at the feet of the Queen-mother, and obtain a promise of protection. As I had been recommended to her as nurse by the Queen of Navarre, she listened to my complaints, and my husband was released from custody, and part of his goods restored; but neither Florio, nor any of his comrades were even reprimanded. In an attempt that was made shortly after on the life of the Count de Montgomery, this boy was discovered to be one of the assassins; but again he was permitted to escape, though my husband, who was on the spot when the crime was attempted, identified the young ruffian. After that he was lost sight of. In the meantime the death of the King occurred, and I had the affliction to lose my beloved husband, who disappeared in a mysterious manner, and was never heard of after he set out on a journey of importance, having a secret end in view, which

he was to conceal by carrying merchandize with him. Alas! there is a sad tale connected with his loss, which it were useless for me to recount. Years passed away; and amongst the numerous favourites who have by turns ruled the Queen-mother by their arts, none succeeded so entirely in gaining her regard as René Bianco, who, being her countryman, had free access to her, and coming recommended by some powerful friends, was soon taken into her confidence. I was long before I saw him, for he seemed to avoid being in my vicinity; but when I did, though more than twenty years had passed, I-recognized in him—I feel sure I could not be deceived—no other than Florio."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Alix. "And this is the man my father receives into his counsels, and whom I am expected to notice favourably! Does he know you, dear nurse,—or rather, is he aware that you know him?"

"I have been careful to appear unconscious of his identity," replied Mabille, "as I fear him much. I have already hinted to the King my suspicions of his unworthiness; and I endeavour to prevent, as much as possible, his approaching Charles, for I suspect every one who is in the confidence of the Queen-mother, whose projects are inscrutable. Her son, the Duke

of Anjou, is the only one of her children whom the really loves, and for his sake I believe she would dare any crime!"

"This is fearful!" said Alix. "We live on the brink of a precipice, threatened with destruction every hour."

"for the worst. I feel certain that a crisis is at hand; and whatever happens, no good towards the Protestants is intended. Do not allow your spirits to sink or your courage to fail, for we shall all be called upon to bear to the utmost. Trust, my child, in heaven's mercy, who thinks fit to let the guilty triumph for a period, and the innocent suffer. We must not murmur, but submit, and look through the tarkness for the light which will shine at last."

As Mabille spoke, her eyes were cast upwards with pious earnestness, a sorrowful yet resigned expression sat on her faded countemance,—it seemed as if a gleam of prophetic inspiration played round her. Alix threw herself into her arms, with a burst of emotion she could not suppress, and their tears were mingled together, when the sound of her father's step interrupted their farther conversation, and hastily drying her eyes she prepared to meet him, and Mabille withdrew.

Claude meanwhile, on his way to the palace, observed that all the houses were being decorated for the approaching festivities. The cyphers of Marguerite and Henry were everywhere intertwined in garlands of flowers, while banners and drapery were displayed on every side. All wore an air of animation; every countenance was cheerful; and the acclamations of the people were loud as the young King of Navarre, mounted on a spirited charger, rode towards the palace, accompanied by the Admiral de Coligni. The open and manly countenance of Henry, notwithstanding that a benevolent smile greeted those around him, was clouded by sadness; and as he looked on the gay preparations, and the sparkling habiliments he wore, he seemed to be thinking that the mourning weeds for his beloved mother had been exchanged too soon. With a starting tear, which he could not conceal, Claude saluted the Prince as he passed, and his look of mournful and affectionate sympathy did not pass unnoticed by Henry, who, turning on him a glance full of kindness, waved his hand in token of recognition, and continued his way. His white plume soon disappeared under the arch of the palace gate, and Claude was following, when across the court through which the princes had passed, he beheld Bianco coming hastily forward, at intervals turning his head, as if observing their motions. He seemed so much occupied, that he was close to Claude before he perceived him, and on his looking suddenly up, the latter was startled by the sinister expression of his scowling brow and the pallid hue of his cheek. His face, however, instantly brightened as he greeted Claude, and the cordial and apparently frank character which it assumed, formed a striking contrast with that of the moment before. The transition was not lost upon his observer, whose recent conversation with Mabille flashed upon his mind.

- "You are looked for, Claude, by the President; I was dispatched to seek you," said René.
- "I have been unexpectedly detained," answered the secretary, "and hasten to redeem my tegligence."
- "You should apologise to me," said René, miling, "if you knew how much interested I m in your delay."

They advanced together, and René, with an air of friendly confidence, resumed, "You remember our conversation of the other night? Well, my star is rising, I assure you: the

Queen-mother has this day granted me a splendid pension, and has intimated to the President Bailly her wish that I should become his sonin-law. What think you of my fortune now?"

"You!" cried Claude, starting back, "can it be possible? But will Bailly — will his daughter consent?"

"Will they refuse," said Bianco with emphasis, his lip curling with an ironical expression, "when my donna commands? No, no, I am sure of Bailly; and as for the pretty Alix, her consent is easily gained."

They proceeded in silence; a thousand uneasy thoughts agitating the bosom of Claude, and René being occupied with reveries of ambition, till, having reached the chamber where the President awaited his secretary, they separated.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROYAL MARRIAGE.

How could she wed?—what could I do but wed?

MATHURIN'S Bertram.

The two brides, whose marriage was to secure the happiness of their country, saw the morning dawn upon the day fixed with feelings differing, yet in some degree the same.

Perhaps, for the first time in her life, Marguerite de Valois was full of thought: now that the time had really arrived, its importance to herself and those connected with her seemed to fash upon her mind, and to banish the levity and careless indifference with which she had treated the subject. Love was, in her estimation, a matter of every-day occurrence: she heard of it, saw it wherever she moved; every man who approached her either felt or feigned it; and so accustomed was she to homage and devotion, that its absence alone attracted her attention: she considered it a part of her state,

- of the real nature of true affection she was perfectly unconscious. She had more than once imagined herself in love, mistaking gratified vanity for a deeper emotion, - had felt pleasure in the presence of its object, and regret in absence, - but this was a pastime, and no more: she looked upon the existence of love, such as the records of romance pourtraved it, as a poetical fiction, never intended to enter into the affairs of real life. Of late a change, sudden and startling, had come over her mind. Henry was to be her husband. She looked upon him as a person appointed for state reasons to be her companion for life; she saw in him an uneducated boy, with reputed courage, supposed goodness of heart, and recorded generous feelings, but with manners quite unfashioned, with taste uncultivated, and a coldness towards herself altogether imperturbable. He had, nevertheless, in spite of his retiring quietness, bursts of enthusiasm at times which astonished those about him, and momentary glimpses of eloquence which threw into shade the powers of polished courtiers who usually eclipsed him: all this she witnessed only in his intercourse with others,-with her he was always studiously guarded and formal, his conversation in monosyllables, and his expressions merely commonplace. It was impossible that he should interest her: and how should she live with one who seemed to build up between them a barrier of ice as impenetrable as that of his native mountains.

It was a serious thought,—a fearful undertaking! Her heart was ready to accept his homage, but he did not offer it: she would have endeavoured to school herself into at least the semblance of regard, but he did not seek it. She had no escape from her fate; she must marry a man who was indifferent to her, and to him she was nothing more than a political appendage. It was, therefore, with bitter and chilled feelings that she suffered herself to be decked for this unpromising bridal, and she resolved to show her careless bridegroom that her inclination had nothing to do with the ceremony she was forced to go through.

The mind of Marie de Cleves was equally occupied with that of Marguerite, but every fresh springing thought was fraught with agony and unutterable despair. Young, inexperienced, innocent, and happy, she had never contemplated, even when she knew that her hand was promised, the misery which would attend the sacrifice. She was to marry, like her friend the

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Princess Marguerite, a man with whom she was scarcely acquainted: with the Prince of Condé she had scarcely ever exchanged a word, yet she would be expected to devote the remainder of her life to him, while she loved, adored, existed for another! The Duke of Anjou had at length told her all that she had hoped, sighed for, prayed to be convinced of—and the conviction of her happiness and wretchedness came together. A frightful gulf was opened before her; she could not fly from its brink; she was urged onwards though she saw it yawning beneath her feet.

To her, pure as she was, and unsuspicious of evil, the character of Henry of Anjou appeared little short of perfection: his exquisite refinement, his insinuating address, his wit, grace, and the air of absorbed devotion he could throw into his attentions, were sufficient to have won a heart more practised in the ways of the world; but when, in addition to the charm which attracted all, real feeling and passionate attachment came to his aid, how was it possible for the guileless and confiding girl of sixteen to resist the spell, and to give up her whole soul to the delicious certainty of loving and being beloved.

Her daily intercourse with Marguerite, who

was tenderly attached to her, and found in her innocent enthusiasm, and total absence of suspicion, something to admire and delight in, favoured in no small degree the suit of the Duke, and gave him opportunities which he was not slow to take advantage of.

Although he could boast of no more morality than belonged to the profligate court in which he lived, vet, for the first time, on this occasion he was inspired with a real passion, almost, in its intensity and delicacy, worthy of her who had caused it - a passion which called into being all that was good in his character, while its evil, which, alas! preponderated, was lulled, for the time, entirely to rest. He had, like the beautiful girl whom he was leading into danger, been so occupied with his happiness that he had totally forgotten the positions in which they were mutually placed, and, contented with the bliss of the present moment, would not allow himself to look beyond, although he could not but be aware that the fabric of his delusive ancy might be annihilated in a moment.

The terrible hour had now come, and, like those who live close to a volcano, and know its fearful explosion must one day arrive and sweep their city to perdition, yet put off the evil anticipation, and revel on the brink of the crater, so Marie awoke to the horror of her fate, and was stunned with the extent of her misfortune.

The young King of Navarre, in the mean time, and the Prince of Condé, felt themselves victims bound to the stake without the means of escape, bewildered with crowding fears for the future, and an appalling dread of the present. They had mutually resolved to submit to their inevitable destiny, but they sternly resisted all approaches to what they considered culpable weakness. The death of Queen Jeanne, and the frightful suspicions entertained by the Huguenot party, had fatally undeceived them as to the professions of their enemies, and they felt that some further act remained to complete the tragedy so begun. Death, or some violent struggle, was what they contemplated, and this double marriage seemed to them but another scene in the mysterious drama preparing: for the actors in it they cared little, and were far from imagining what conflicts reigned in the breasts of those who were victims like themselves.

Such were the sentiments of the four persons who prepared that morning to take the principal parts in the great pageant at which all France was to look on. With these feelings they joined their respective parties, and the ceremonies of the royal bridal began.

The Princess Marguerite, after the ceremony of betrothment had taken place, had been conducted on the previous evening from the palace of the Louvre to that of the Evêché de Paris. near the cathedral of Nôtre Dame, and in the morning the King of Navarre, accompanied by the Dukes of Anjou and Alencon, the Princes of Condé, the Marquis of Conti, the Dukes of Montpensier, Guise, Aumale, and Nevers, and all the marshals and noblemen of the court. came to the Evêché to fetch the bride, who was conducted to them by King Charles. The three royal brothers, the bridegroom, and the Prince of Condé appeared in the same costume. to indicate their union of sentiment and interest. This was a dress of pale yellow satin entirely covered with the richest embroidery, in raised silver, enriched with pearls and precious stones of great price. All the other Catholic princes were habited in colours according to their taste, each as magnificent as could be imagined; but it was worthy of remark, that the greatest part of the Huguenot gentlemen who assisted at the ceremony wore only their ordinary plain dresses without ornament or pretension.

From the Evêché to the Cathedral a raised

gallery had been erected, which was hung with cloth of gold, along which the bridal procession was to pass to arrive at the temporary scaffolding, where, in the sight of the assembled people, the marriage ceremony was to be gone through. First marched a hundred gentlemen holding axes, then the heralds at arms with their emblazoned coats, a long line of guards, officers of the king's household, and a band of trumpets, clarions, hautboys, and other instruments. Then came the Princess Marguerite, led by King Charles, followed by the Queen-mother, the reigning Queen, the gentle and amiable Elizabeth of Austria, Claude de France Duchess of Lorraine, and a train of princesses and ladies without number, all dressed in cloth of gold and silver, and blazing with jewels.

The immense square of the Parvis-Notre-Dame was filled with eager spectators, scarcely kept back by the multitude of guards, whose lines extended along the whole way from the palace of the Louvre to the cathedral, and it seemed as if the whole population of Paris and its environs were poured forth into the streets through which the magnificent procession of the kings and queens concerned in the ceremony of this important marriage was to pass. From the roofs of the churches of St. Chris-

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tophe, and of Ste. Geneviève des Ardens, of St. Jean le Rond, and St. Denis du Pas, myriads of eyes were gazing on the scene below; and all the numerous religious edifices besides. which then surrounded their great mother, allowed the people on that day to enjoy the advantage which their exalted position afforded. The sombre and severe character of these antique buildings was changed, as if by magic: their usually gloomy aspect gave place to an air of lightness and gaiety, - garlands, flags, streamers, scarfs, fluttered from every window and loophole, and the gorgeous and majestic rile of Notre Dame itself assumed for the time t less solemn and awful appearance. The magnificent facade of this imposing edifice then, as ever, offered a spectacle worthy of the gaze of the admiring crowd. Its three irregular porticos, surcharged with statues and crowded with ernaments, rose proudly as if to welcome the guests who sought to enter those wondrous gates of wrought iron, whose marvellous delicacy and elaborate beauty it was currently believed could only have been produced by unearthly hands. The mysterious zodiac which omamented the chief entrance was looked upon on this occasion as fraught with more than usual meaning, and there were some amongst the crowd who did not hesitate to affirm that the figure of the Holy Virgin, which the pious inventor had substituted for that of Ceres, bowed her head as the bridal train approached. However this might be, onward it came glittering with gold and gems, one mass of uninterrupted splendour. From their niches along the whole extent of the face of the church, the twenty-seven statues of a race of kings seemed to look down with exultation, as a peal of artillery, loud, long, and solemn, announced the arrival of the royal visitants.

Above the principal portico, beneath the great rose window, the platform had been erected on which Henry of Navarre and his bride were to be exhibited to the people, and where the service was to be concluded. Within was nearly the same concourse of spectators as without, for surrounding the choir, the nave, and extending along the line of arches, the beautiful gallery supported by one hundred and eight slender columns was filled to overflowing by splendidly dressed persons anxious to witness the spectacle.

From the hundred painted windows and from the three gorgeous roses the light of a mid-day summer sun poured down a flood of radiance, touching with every hue of the rainbow the carved foliage of the marble pillars, and casting gleams of variegated colour on the chequered floor. In forty-five chapels round, the altars vere decked with the most sumptuous ornanents, a multitude of lights burnt before every thrine, and relics of the most precious nature were exhibited to the eyes of the believer, amongst which a finger of St. John the Baptist and part of the head of St. Denis were not the but conspicuous. Huge, fierce, and menacing, luning against a pillar of the nave, the gigantic fgure of St. Christopher, twenty-eight feet in leight, bent under the weight of the miraculous isfant borne on his shoulders, and supported on the trunk of an enormous tree, appeared regarding with attention the train which swept past him; the equestrian statue of Philip de Valois seemed also instinct with life and about to urge his war-steed onwards, as he did when, after the battle of Cassel, the redoubtable warfor entering the church fully caparisoned, his visor closed, his sword in hand, rode up to the high altar, there to return thanks to the blessed Virgin for the victory he had gained.

The train of nobles, princes and ladies slowly advanced to the high altar, where they were to hear mass. The Protestant part of the procession separated themselves from the rest and

joined the King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé in the choir, where they waited till the Cardinal de Bourbon had gone through that sacred service and they were summoned to take their part in the marriage ceremony.

In a conspicuous situation in the gallery reserved for the friends and intimates of those in power, sat the President Bailly and his beautiful daughter Alix, spectators of the pageant, and at no great distance from them, leaning against one of the delicate columns, stood the secretary Claude Emars. His gaze was not apparently attracted by the splendid scene around him, the glittering lights, the blaze of jewels, the gorgeous pageantryneither did he seem to have ears for the solemn and entrancing melody, the bursts of harmonious fervour which echoed through the stupendous aisles, and lingered amidst the forest of beams which adorned the majestic roof,there was but one object in all that glorious assemblage which had power to occupy his mind; and that was Alix. She was, like all around her, richly dressed, and her beauty, if possible, was more than usually remarkable; but Claude observed that her countenance wore no appearance of pleasure, and that from time to time she cast an alarmed, anxious glance around, as if her eyes feared to encounter some object they would willingly avoid. As he bent forward, almost unconsciously gazing upon her, he was suddenly recalled to recollection by the deep blush that overspread her brow as her glance met his and she recognised the person who was so intently occupied in contemplating her features. Claude instantly cast down his eyes in equal confusion and an emotion which he feared another look would betray. He had not entirely recovered his presence of mind when his regards rested on the features of René Bianco: he saw him approach the spot where Alix sat, and with his accustomed ease and effrontery address the President and his daughter. With difficulty repressing an exclamation of vexation, he watched the movements of the party, and observed the looks of Alix when René spoke to her to be those of horror, so far did they exceed the expression of mere aversion. The cold and unmoved countenance of Bailly preserved its usual character. René was himself all cheerfulness and exultation; his dress was peculiarly splendid, and set off to advantage his remarkably handsome figure, while the high white plume that waved over his dark brows relieved the olive tint of his complexion, and as he pointed out to his companions the approach of Queen Catherine, he seemed no unfitting favourite for such a personage.

The Queen-mother and her followers were, at the moment when all this was passing, proceeding, as has been said, towards the high altar. She leant on the arm of her favourite son Anjou, whose face was very pale, and his eye wandering with an expression of pain and uneasiness little suited to the occasion: he scarcely looked up, and carefully avoided turning his eyes towards the group of ladies, amongst whom was the interesting and unfortunate Marie de Cleves.

As they passed the gallery, she paused and beckoned to René, who was instantly at her side. She said a few words to him in a low voice, while her large bold eyes were fixed on Alix, who stood pale, and almost breathless, the object of her scrutiny. At length, after a significant smile bestowed on her favourite, she continued her way, while Alix sunk back on her seat pale as marble, and apparently as inanimate. Her situation did not, however, attract attention, for every eye was turned in the direction of the glittering party who were passing. Claude watched her with agonized feelings, and a sympathy which he did not

attempt to control; it seemed to him that he had a right to gaze upon her,—to pity her, to feel with her, now that she was deserted by all besides; and he almost exulted to think that his was perhaps the only heart in all that crowded place which responded to hers, unconscious though she was of what he was at that moment enduring. So engrossed was he with her alone, that a circumstance escaped his observation, by no means calculated to have abated his uneasiness.

Attracted by the attention of the Queenmother, the eyes of several of the courtiers were directed towards the object of her regard, and amongst others the Count de Coconnas, and the celebrated La Mole, who were following conspicuously in the train, and paused a moment at the same time as Catherine.

Count Boniface La Mole was one of the most remarkable persons of his time, renowned for the elegance of his person, and the éclat attached to all that belonged to him. His taste was the criterion of fashion; his approval stamped value on every new invention, and every extravagant fashion and habit. The poets, players, and men of letters of the day, sought his applause. The beauties who surrounded the politic and intriguing Catherine,

dressed, looked, and spoke to please and captivate him. Even the elegant, refined, and graceful Marguerite allowed his influence, and permitted her taste to be in a great degree regulated by his. Her condescension in this respect had given rise to hints that the distinguished courtier was not indifferent to the Princess who delighted so much in his society, and this reputation not a little enhanced his value amongst his associates, nor did his vanity fail to turn the supposition to the best account.

The epithet which he had acquired of Le Baladin de la Cour, had not raised him much in the estimation of sober-minded persons, and he was looked upon by the better part of the community as the very impersonation of profligacy and effeminacy.

This accomplished ornament of the most unprincipled court in Europe was now carelessly sauntering on in the train of the Queen-mother, carefully avoiding any indication of interest in the ceremonial which absorbed all attention, but looking from side to side with an air of profound indifference, occasionally lifting from his side, where it depended, a small mirror in a gold frame, which, though till lately an appendage of the female toilet, he had newly introduced as an ornament amongst the fops of the

period. His attire bespoke the utmost care and conideration, and proclaimed the high importare attached to his character: the most faulthe propriety reigned throughout, and the enunble was so perfect and so inimitable that no one portion of the elaborate finish shone out more conspicuously than the rest. In his ears he wore rings of rubies, with drops of pearl; his hair was curled, turned back, and fastened with combs; the hat he negligently held was storned with an aigrette of diamonds, and from the front hung over the forehead, when worn, a profusion of little ornaments in a fringe of various-coloured gems, which shook at every wement of the head. His beard was long and pointed.—a mode very dear to him, as he was concious of the peculiarly fine growth of that is moving appendage. — in which particular, as we of the nobles could not vie with him, a few blowed the example of Henry of Anjou, whose beard was worn short, and whose hair was dved of whatever colour pleased him for the time. On his white uncovered hand sparkled numerous small rings, from which, as he occasionally waved his fringed handkerchief, or pointed to some object, a stream of odour issued, the hollows of each ring being filled with musk. His short mantle was of rich silk, gorgeously em-

broidered in an antique pattern of gold and jewels, with devices and mottos intermixed with its scrolls and foliage; his throat displayed a necklace of pearls, with clasps of sapphire surrounded by sparks of diamonds: a high transparent ruff shaded the back of his neck, and a double collar of the same light texture, covered with delicate work, fell on his shoulders. His nether garments were of cloth of gold, the seams and slashes sprinkled and edged with small buttons of jewels of every hue; large bouquets of pearls in his shoes, completed his sparkling costume. His remarkably handsome person, added to the ease and grace with which he wore this profusion of ornament, rendered him the most dazzling and magnificent figure in the procession.

The first glance which he cast on Alix arrested his attention. Her youth, her extreme beauty, and a dignified yet mournful expression in her countenance, very different from all around her, whose faces were lighted up with smiles of pleasure, altogether riveted his admiration.

"God of love!" said he to Count Coconnas, his companion, "observe yonder deity of beauty; what butterfly just escaped from its confinement has spread its wings with so much glory! it should flutter only in a great man's garden. She is the very personification of Ronsard's description—

"Amour, jeunesse et les graces qui sont Filles du ciel lui pendoient sur le front, Mais ce que plus redoubla mon service C'est qu'elle avait un visage sans art!"

The Count Coconnas languidly turned his eyes towards her. "Do you mean that pale beauty who looks scared at the regards of the Queen?" asked he. "Methinks you desire to be singular on this occasion. I see hundreds round more worthy of our gaze, — if, indeed, there is anything in this fading world which should claim a moment's notice from the eye of taste. The Duchess of Nevers becomes her high plume well—'tis a fashion exquisitely devised for a majestic stature. What a complexion she has!—

" Jeune déesse au teint vermeil?"

He uttered this compliment loud enough to be heard by her to whom it was addressed. The Duchess, at that moment, dropped the bigotelle which held her fan, and Coconnas instantly hastened to present it to her, whispering, as he restored it, a thousand agreeable nothings, which were listened to with gratified vanity.

La Mole, meantime, continued to gaze on Alix, who, all unconscious of his admiration, was entirely engrossed in reflection on the effrontery of Bianco, and the haughty yet familiar glance of the Queen-mother. The train moved on, and La Mole among the rest, without either Claude or herself being aware of the impression her beauty had made. At this moment Claude would have given his existence to approach her, to support her drooping form, to whisper consolation to her wounded spirit. The truth, which he had long striven to conceal from himself, rushed with violence on his mind, and told him that from the moment he had first beheld her. his peace was resigned to the keeping of the beautiful Alix. "Alas! vain hope,-vain conviction! Who am I," he exclaimed mentally, "that I should dare to love her? Am I not unknown, - undistinguished? - one on whom she has never condescended to bestow a thought, except a transient one of obligation, the very existence of which precludes a tenderer sentiment. We are widely,-fatally separated. Oh, that we had never met! Why did a star of such loveliness illume my sky for a moment. only to render my future night more dismal?"

He withdrew his gaze from the face of Alix, and with feelings of unutterable despondency sunk back against the pillar near which he had shrouded himself, and waited with the apathy of wretchedness till the ceremonies should be concluded, and he could indulge in silence and solitude the tears which he was obliged to suppress.

There was more wretchedness in that gorgeous assemblage than the delighted and admiring lookers-on dreamt of : there were fear, regret, disappointment, mortification, and despair; measy, ambitious thoughts, and cruel designs, deceit, and treachery, and wickedness. All the principal actors in the scene were disturbed with images "which had no business there at such a time." The beautiful Marguerite stood at the altar blazing in splendour, and eclipsing all in charms, but her bridegroom's heart was far away; it was in the tomb with his beloved mother, whom in his affections no other could replace. The Princess wore a regal crown covered with jewels of great price; her own rich dark hair, contrary to the usual fashion of the day, was arranged in long ringlets, and floated over her shoulders, on which an ermine cape of state was thrown, whose rounded ends descended to her waist in front, and were fastened with clasps of large diamonds. Her flowing train of violet velvet, strewed with fleursde-lis, was supported by three princesses of royal blood; her robe was of white cloth of silver, studded with fleurs-de-lis of pearls and other jewels. Nothing could exceed the richness and costliness of her appearance, but her countenance was at variance with the display: her brow was contracted, her cheek flushed, and her carriage haughty and unbending. She went through the ceremony with a cold and unmoved endurance; and so indifferent did she appear to what was expected of her, that when she was required to respond to the demand of the Cardinal-priest, her brother, King Charles, observing that she remained silent, placed his hand at the back of her head, and bent it down in sign of assent. The unhappy Marie de Cleves, pale as marble, and stupified with grief. was supported on all sides by her friends, who in vain endeavoured to conceal the state in which they found her. Her bridegroom, with averted looks, appeared unconscious of the repugnance she exhibited, and was only roused from his apparent reverie by observing that, as the service ended which made her his wife, she had fainted in the arms of her sister, the Duchess de Nevers.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUPPER AT COURT.

Sledge. Forks !—what be they!

Mearcraft. The landable use of forks

Brought into custom here as they 're in Italy.

To the sparing of napkins.

Ben Jonson's Devil's en Au.

The citizens of Paris, and all the lovers of when now began to look forward to quiet days and a restoration of that peace of which the contentions of party had too long deprived them. They saw before them a bright vista of prosperity, confidence restored, and good understanding secured, and they blessed the union which had bestowed peace on all. The turbulence of the Guises was lulled to rest, the restless Hugenots were appeared, and the court party was satisfied. This was the outward appearance that things wore,—within the palace of the Louvre a far different aspect reigned: to that retreat had slunk the very spirit of destruction

whose ministers were secretly at work upon a deed as hideous as unexpected.

Although the high-priestess of mischief, Catherine, intended that Charles should be a principal tool in the act she meditated, yet she was too well aware of his vacillating disposition, to entrust him fully with her plans.

The murder of the Admiral de Coligni had been agreed upon, in solemn conclave, between de Retz her minion, the Duke de Guise, and herself, yet the King was left in ignorance of their designs concerning him. He knew that the great object of their policy was to collect together in one focus all the leaders of the Protestant party, and he hailed the success of that scheme with exultation, feeling that, once in their power, much might be done to overreach and humble them; but he had not contemplated the great stroke of policy which should annihilate the whole power at one blow. His excited and weak mind could not fix itself to any particular point - visions of imprisonment, trial, attainder, and probably death, floated in his imagination, and he looked with complacency on such a fate prepared for his Protestant subjects. The death of the Queen of Navarre had surprised him, and his suspicions pointed to his mother as the cause; but he

asked no questions: the undisguised grief of his nurse considerably shook his nerves, and awakened a train of thought anything but soothing. Weak in health at all times, the excitement of the last few weeks had greatly irritated and increased his complaints, and his brain was heated in so fearful a manner that Mabille feared for his reason, and would fain have prevented his attending to business or receiving the visits of his mother, which never failed to bring on a return of the symptoms she dreaded. He had become of late extremely jealous of his authority, and at times even openly proclaimed his resolution to cast off the voke imposed on him by Catherine and her partisans: but his determination always quailed before her superior art and firmness, and expended itself in fretful demonstrations of anger and discontent. His envy of his brother Anjou had also, of late, grown into a malady, and the sight of him had become as odious as it appeared satisfactory to the Queen-mother. Naturally cruel and revengeful, and possessed of a large share of cunning and deceit, still, at times, it appeared as if glimpses of a better nature shone through his evil propensities, which, had they been fostered, might have neutralized the bad qualities ordinarily so much more prominent. There were moments when he listened to the mild advice and gentle admonitions of Mabille with patience, and would then form benevolent plens for the relief of the persecuted followers of what was at that time called "the Religion:" then he would shudder at the recollection of his mother's counsels, and her hard, cold, cruel, policy would inspire him with horror. As long as he heard only of merciful and gentle means, his mind embraced them; but unfortunately, one hour of association with the resolute and remorselses could change the whole current of his ideas, and make him the instrument they required.

He was found in one of his most conciliatory moods by the Admiral de Coligni, immediately after the marriage of his sister was concluded; and the conversation having been led to the persecutions suffered by the Protestants in the Low Countries, Coligni urged the necessity of measures being taken for their protection: the King listened with great apparent sympathy, and entreated the Admiral to take upon himself the direction of all arrangements requisite, and to succour them to the extent of his power.

"But," said he, "my father," thus he was in the habit of addressing Coligni when in good temper, "there is one thing of which we must be cautious. My mother suspects that I am inclined to the cause,—you know her shifting policy; now she is the friend, and now the enemy of the Huguenots. I am firm, and nothing shall make me swerve from my determination to do them justice and extend towards them paternal succour. But, remember, we must not let her thrust herself into our councils; let her, at least, be only half aware of our intentions, or she will spoil all."

"But, sire," said the high-minded Admiral,
"why should we conceal from that wise princess
plans, in which her experience and foresight
night aid us. She is ever zealous for the good
of the state, and I need scarcely remark to your
pace what an exemplary mother she has aiway proved herself."

"Psha!" said Charles, peevishly, "you talk without knowing of whom you speak: my nother is the most dangerous of women: the most deceitful and designing, and, depend upon it, the most accomplished marplot in the world."

The Admiral was silent, surprised and distrased by this irreverent language, and extensoured to change the subject. "Ah!" said Charles, turning to M. de Teligni, who was standing near, "I see the Admiral is shocked at my plain speaking; he does not like sincerity. Shall I confess the truth to you! I feet that I

have none about me whom I can trust. vannes is given up to ambition; Vieilleville loves nothing but good cheer; Cossé is a mere miser; De Montmorency is a slave to the pleasures of hunting and hawking; De Retz, - when I say he is a Spaniard, I say everything; whatever merits my mother may see in him are lost upon me. As for my mother, herself," added he, laughing, " you know the proverb,-the Italian cheats the Spaniard, and the Florentine all other Italians; but see, Coligni frowns again, so we will say nothing of her. For the rest, all the lords of my council are fools, my secretaries of state, arrant knaves. I have plenty of advisers who urge me for their own ends, and not for the benefit of myself or my people; but where are my friends? I have no friends. I turn from side to side, and I see no way of escape from the position in which I stand.

"Declare yourself openly the friend of the Protestants, sire," said Coligni boldly. "Be just—be generous; follow the noble promptings of your heart; be guided by none of those of whom you disapprove, but act, and be indeed, a father and a king!"

"I will!" said Charles with animation; "I will have no interference. Give me but a few

days, Admiral; you will see if Charles can be a king, or if he is to be for ever crushed and overwhelmed by the power of others."

Having thus spoken, as if he already feared that he had said too much, he relapsed into silence, and appearing exhausted and unwell, the noblemen took their leave; not, however, without renewed expressions of esteem and regard for their sovereign, and assurances on his part of good faith and zeal in their cause.

As the Admiral descended the steps of the palace to mount his horse, he could not help saying to his friends, "The King means us well. We are fortunate in having so true an ally."

"My lord," said one who was near him, bluntly, "I am sorry to hear you say so."

"How! Blosset," answered the Admiral, why should you regret to hear good news?"

"Admiral," replied the Captain, "I have fought much against the Catholics, whom I think excellent enemies, and should not be sorry to meet them on that ground again; but, for friends, I confess I like them so little, that I mean to rid myself of their society at once, and this very day am about to set out for

Burgundy. I counsel you and all your friends to follow my good example. Depend upon it, it would be for the health of all."

"But why, Captain," asked Coligni, "should you leave the capital now, just when we are on the very pinnacle of content, with the King our good friend?"

"He is too good!" interrupted Blosset.

"These demonstrations of his friendship have determined me. How kind he is to surround us with his Swiss guard!—to show us honour by so many troops entering Paris! Let us all thank him at a distance; and in the meantime take care of ourselves. Follow my advice, Admiral: quit this city without delay. Not another hour sees Captain Blosset within its walls." So saying the Burgundian spurred his steed, and turning once more to wave his hand to Coligni, disappeared.

A series of entertainments was announced inall the palaces of Paris in honour of the propitious nuptials which had just taken place. Night and day nothing was to be heard of but rejoicing and festivity, and it seemed as if the business of everyday-life would never be resumed. Amongst the most curious and conspicuous of these fêtes was one, the features of which were so peculiar as to deserve mention.

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The evening's pastime began with a grand ball given by King Charles to the newly married pair, and to all the great officers of state, and chief magistrates of the city. After dancing vas ended, a ponderous masque commenced, in which most of the royal party bore a share. First appeared on the scene, moved by machinery, four enormous rocks, silvered over, where marine gods were seated, bearing various instruments of music, on which they played with infinite skill. As these disappeared others alvanced, varied by representations of mernaids, dolphins, and other strange creatures reclining amidst bowers of coral and seaweed, shells and pearls. On the highest of these noving rocks appeared beneath a canopy supported by silver pillars a god of the sea, personated by the celebrated singer Estienne le Roy, looked upon at that time as the very greatest of all artists, whose melodious voice enchanted all hearers, and who poured forth from his exalted position a flood of music capable of melting the rock on which he sat, if the enthusiastic encomiums lavished upon him by the fashionable audience assembled were to be believed. After these animated mountains had removed themselves, came a splendid gilded chariot drawn by sea-horses, on which other marine animals of large dimensions appeared to sport, holding in the folds of their wreathed tails an immense shell of gold, within which sat enthroned Neptune, presented by King Charles himself, holding his trident, and guiding his aquatic subjects by means of glittering reins. Other cars of a similar description next appeared; and the prince-gods within them, descending to earth, each selected a lady, and with her trod the mazes of a dance, whose grace and beauty was admired and applauded beyond all the wonders which had preceded it.

The supper which followed was hailed, both by the actors and spectators, with infinite satisfaction; and even the fastidious taste of the great critic of fashion, La Mole, was almost satisfied with the elegant arrangement of the tables, on which appeared the enamelled dishes of Limoges, holding meats of the most exquisite description. Vases of wrought gold and painted cups, the sculptures and figures of which proclaimed by their beauty the hands of the great masters Palizzi and Celini; saltcellars by the same wondrous artists, and carved and richly-ornamented knives; spoons of ivory, whose handles were worked in transparent patterns, as if spiders or fairies had fabricated them; and the newly-introduced two-pronged tork, against the effeminacy of using which the preachers of the day inveighed with great bitterness,—all were of the most costly and admirable description. The finest wines were in profusion, and due justice was done to the sparkling vin d'Arbois and the clarette, all the respective merits acknowledged of the vintage of Bar, St. Pourcain, Loire, St. Jangon, Galardon, Grensche, and all the infinite variety of muscadins, which were peculiarly appreciated by the fair guests who partook of them.

"It cannot be denied," said La Mole to a friend, "that this entertainment is as well arranged as it is possible for so heavy and crowded an affair to be. There is, however, no real elegance to be found at royal tables; all is gorgeous, all is on a magnificent scale: true refinement can only be attained in a small space, where every object that meets the eye can be attended to, and where no one discrepancy shall shock and irritate the feelings. I mean shortly to give a small—a very small entertainment, to a select few of the princesses, and will show them what these things should be; rather in order to induce them to follow a virtuous example, and so manage that I may not be annoyed by displays of gross grandeur, than with a view to their pleasure; for, to tell truth, except the Lady Marguerite herself, and a few others, I hold them little worthy to appreciate my taste."

Those courtiers who held La Mole to be their master and oracle in matters of elegance, of course from the moment he had spoken thus, looked with a pitying eye upon all the glories which wooed their approbation, and the whole aim of their existence henceforth seemed to be to attain the distinction of an invitation to the fête in perspective: they were careful, therefore, of words, looks, and actions, lest, offending by a shade of rusticity his sensitive feelings, they should lose the envied distinction which would at once stamp their character for fashion with immortal fame.

The supper ended, a most mysterious and extraordinary species of amusement was introduced in the shape of a drama, in which Charles the Ninth and his brothers sustained the principal parts. The object of it seemed inscrutable and its policy appeared more than doubtful, as it was calculated to alarm those whom it was the interest of the court to lull into security.

The scenes represented were Paradise and the Infernal regions, with contending knights, who, being overcome by the royal champions, were driven from the gardens of Delight into the abode of darkness. No one could explain the allegory, and so full of horror did it appear, that few but those engaged in the performance seemed to receive any satisfaction regarding it; and on the breaking up of the pageant, a general gloom seemed to have overspread the place. The guests dispersed, and the former gaiety and enjoyment of the night was effaced from the minds of all, leaving a vague terror and an unpleasant remembrance in their stead.

The next day the lists were prepared in the great court of the Louvre for a match of running at the ring. Many of the young knights were extremely desirous that a tournament should take place, but the Queen-mother's repugnance wit was so great, that the idea was reluctantly relinquished. Since the period of her husband's death she could not endure pastimes of the kind, and they had been consequently banished entirely from France. A gallery, richly ornamented and hung with cloth of gold, was arranged for the ladies, and there assembled all the beauties of the court to witness the spectacle. The King and the Duke of Anjou appeared in a costume which excited some astonishment, and the taste of which was thought questionable: the Duke de Guise and the Chevalier d'Angoulême, natural son of the late King, adopted the same costume, which was that ef Amazons. The King of Navarre and a large body of his friends were dressed as Turks, with robes of cloth of gold and rich turbens; the Prince of Condé and the young de Rochesoucault as Greek warriors, and all their friends and attendants in different fantastic garbs. was remarked, that in spite of all the splendour attending this solemnity, the usual gaiety did not prevail. Every one remarked the absence of the Mareschal de Montmorency, who had excused himself from joining the fête, and had retired to his country-house out of Paris; and neither the Admiral nor many of his people were there. After there had been a few courses, the King was drawn aside by some of his party, who communicated to him, that in the Pré sax Clercs had been remarked that morning a concourse of persons mounted, who paraded about without any apparent cause; also, that in many of the places in Paris people assembled wearing pistols, carrying arquebusses and other weapons, contrary to the express command issued that no arms should be borne during the festivities. The Prevôt de Paris, Nantouillet, who had been an invited guest, and was a man of great pomposity and ostentation, bustled about with infinite zeal, and came forward to assure the King that every precaution should be taken to prevent any disturbance.

"But, your Grace," said he, "we are all in so happy a state of peace and bliss at this moment, thanks to your Grace's wise government, that we need fear nothing. The young King of Navarre's followers are so orderly and well-behaved, that I really think it would be difficult to create any annoyance in Paris at this propitious period, he is so much beloved; and as for the fair young Princess Marguerite, the sight of her is enough to repress disorder. Every one hopes to see her one day Queen of France; — she has, indeed, the presence of a Queen!"

Pleased at his own clever manner of conveying a compliment, the Prevôt did not observe the impression his last allusion had made on the King, whose countenance fell, as with some bitterness, which was, however, unheeded by the satisfied Prevôt, he replied:—"I thank you for your friendly wishes, Nantouillet, and it shall go hard but before long we show you a few of our court manners in the city, and prove that we deserve all your civilities. Truly, we may take some hints in courtesy, which we

will not be slow to follow. They tell me your hotel on the Quai de la Vallée is very magnificent."

"Oh! sire," returned the Prevôt, his large fat face becoming scarlet with excitement, while he looked round proudly towards several of the échevins and the Prevôt des Marchands who stood near, "if your Grace would deign to honour me with judging for yourself, my hotel would in future justly deserve its reputation of illustrious. Though it may not become me to say so, I do profess that a larger, finer, better built house than the Hôtel d'Hercule does not exist in Paris.—Ay, your Grace, and the cellars are not badly stored either, nor is the larder ill-supplied!"

"Well, good Nantouillet," said the King, with a significant glance at his brother Anjou, "we will pay you a visit in form, and beware that we find not your boast vain, for we will do justice to all we find."

The elated city dignitary strutted away with great delight to communicate to his envying friends the distinguished honour which had been shown him, and his brain began instantly working to devise a fitting entertainment for his royal and noble guest.

He found Charron, the new Prevôt des Mar-

mant, and its prelicusor, Marrel, in class arrestion with some of the party of Grain, by when an approximent we made from four ties need to need him at his lotted immediately or the parts being himsted. These reconstitution made grantfied at the married consideration made them, learn with less veration of the part which has hiden or fourthfuller, and have all agreed that a period was at length arrived was the experier consequence of the sty was present a largerist consequence.

to it was growing late, and mother images and haller were to be held that night, the thing belie up the ammented some film small, applicating the continuous next city, when he present their meeting again to continue the next.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIBYLS.

Deserted, say'st thou, for a girl abandoned,
A puny girl made up of wa'ry elements!—LEE.

On returning to his hotel that night from the Louvre, the Admiral de Coligni was much struck with the appearance of the streets. Numerous bodies of troops were constantly to be met with arriving from the country in all directions, and filling every avenue. This appeared singular and unnecessary, when all was peace and good-understanding between the parties; and it was with spirits considerably depressed that the Admiral reached his home and his closet, where he gave himself up to musings of a somewhat sad though undefined nature. He was interrupted by the entrance of Labonne, his chief attendant, informing him that a man below desired to be admitted to him.

"What man at this early hour of morning can seek me?" said Coligni.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

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The Admiral before he sealed his letter, unvilling to tear himself from an occupation so sething and so delightful, added the following words, knowing the anxiety of his wife respecting his health:

"For three days past I have been incommoded with violent pain in my chest and stomach, sometimes extremely distressing. The Queen-mother has, however, sent me, through a famous chemist whom she employs,—an Italian of great skill,—a remedy which has already relieved me, and I intend to go on with it if this malady continues, which I do not imagine will be the case.

"Believe me, dearest love, that during all these pastimes and amusements, I shall be most careful to offend no one, nor to forget you,—nor, above all, God.

"Your faithful husband,
"CHASTILLON."

Reluctantly he closed his letter, having kissed it with affection, and calling his page, desired that the Cordelier should be admitted. A tall man, muffled in a cowl, was ushered into the chamber, who stood for some moments

you if I should fail to interest myself in this important affair, and that it were not to my honour if evil were to come to our cause in consequence of my negligence. I cannot but regret the delay which all this festivity occasions, as it must retard my departure from this place, for I cannot hope to be permitted to leave it till next week. If I could consider only my own inclination and convenience, how much should I prefer being with you to staying here; but, for the reasons I have given, I cannot help myself for the present; and the good of the public of course must be considered rather than a private interest. I have many things to tell you, but I defer them till we meet; -night and day, my beloved wife, to do so is the object of my desires. You shall then hear all the particulars of this happy marriage; how the mass for the bride was celebrated, and during the time it was going on the bridegroom, and his friends of our religion, walked about in a separate part of the cathedral. Some things I can tell will amuse you much; but I must leave them now. Adieu, then, my very dearly loved wife. I pray God that he will keep you in his holy charge!

[&]quot; Paris, 18 August, 1572."

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silent, as the Admiral, motioning him to be seated, inquired his business.

"Coligni," said the stranger, solemnly, "my business is of life and death. Attend to what I have to disclose, for much depends on it."

"If," said Coligni, "you are come, good father, to preach to me of your religion, save your time and mine; and know that, however for political reasons I appear to conform and to endure all that is forced upon my approval in the Catholic faith, you have no chance of making a proselyte of a determined Huguenot, and an old soldier like myself. Too many have tried it, and it is but trifling to attempt my conversion."

He spoke this in a gay tone, anxious at once to rid himself of his gloomy-looking guest, who, however, advancing to him, caught his arm, and throwing back his cowl, exclaimed,

"Admiral! ever incautious and unsuspicious as you are, what should have prevented me from acting as at this moment every Catholic in Paris is ready to do?—Why should not a stranger, admitted without question to an unarmed man, have a dagger concealed to rid himself and his party of an enemy?"

"Montgomery!" exclaimed Coligni, "who talks of imprudence? Had not I myself advised

you to avoid the court of Catherine, whose enmity is not subdued against you? and did you not promise to await at La Rochelle the news I was to send you?"

"True," answered Montgomery. "But a stronger feeling than prudence drew me here,a hope which has long lain dormant in my breast, but which circumstances have of late revived. On my arrival in Paris, I sought the concealment of an obscure quarter of the town, where, since the arrival of the Court from Blois, I have been hidden. In the disguise in which you see me, I have contrived to learn much more than can be known in your position. I lodge at the house of a goldsmith called Mathurin Lussaut, a Catholic, but an honest man, who believes me to have arrived from Lyons on business for my convent; and from those who frequent his house, and that of an innkeeper close by in the Rue St. Jacques, I hear much of import to our cause. Be warned in time. I have lost no opportunity of putting all of our party I could reach on their guard: some few have listened to my advice, but a fearful secunty seems to prevail. I endeavoured to save Queen Jeanne, but she was convinced too late: let it not be the same with you !"

"De Lorges," replied the Admiral calmly,

"you, and many of our party, do the King injustice: he means us well. I have his solemn assurances that he will treat all his Protestant subjects as his children. This marriage has secured all. It were unwise to doubt,—it were impolitic to show distrust. Whatever may be the secret feelings or wishes of Catherine, Charles is our friend, and his power can protect us. They are now so closely linked with us, that to injure one of our party is to dissever the chain that holds us all in safety."

"My friend," answered Montgomery, "your honest heart leads you to believe that all around you are noble as yourself. This marriage, though a bold step, is but a blind for dangerous designs. Catherine is capable of the deepest malice,—the most fearful cruelty; she has sworn to exterminate the Protestants, and she will keep her vow, though it cost her the lives of half her Catholic friends to accomplish."

"You have, I know, too much reason," said Coligni, "to fear and to distrust her."

"You know not half the cause I have," exclaimed de Lorges, passionately, — "you only know of the enmity, the persecution, the bitter vengeance with which she has pursued me and mine, from the period when my lance, guided by evil chance alone, entered the brain of the unfortunate King Henry. You know my wife and child died after my banishment; but you know not how! oh, my Agnes! my murdered love!" he cried, clasping his hands in agony, "she who could sacrifice such purity and beauty a thine, is capable of any crime! Listen, and let me recount to you a story which should warn you against trusting to one whose soul knows no touch of human feeling.

"You are aware of the state of dependence and constraint in which Queen Catherine lived from the period of her marriage with Henry II, while the favourite Diana held that place which belonged of right to the wife of the King; many of those about Court, who saw this, felt interested for the young Queen, whose daily mortifications excited pity and sympathy. At that time I was constantly in her society, and the mildness and amiability of her manners, soft, gentle, and unassuming, and the patience with which she bore her wrongs, caused me to look upon her with compassion and admiration. was very far from imagining that the friendly interest I did not endeavour to conceal from her, had given rise in her breast, to emotions which I had no wish and no intention of calling into existence. I was distinguished by her busband with honour, and named her knight in

most of the jousts and tournaments which were unfortunately for me, then so much the mode Her taste for magnificence and extravagance was encouraged by Henry, who, although h had no regard whatever towards her, did no deny her anything which might amuse and cor sole her for all she could not aspire to. Sh was crowned at St. Denis with a splendour, ti then almost unheard of, having been permitte to arrange all the ceremonial after her own wisl and there was scarcely a ball at Court which her taste did not direct. At one of these fête given to the King, on occasion of his retur from Germany, she had composed a ballet i which six young beauties habited as Sibyl were each to recite some verses addressed him. The ballet was danced by Madame Eliz beth, her beautiful daughter, whose tragical far soon followed her marriage with Philip Spain; the lovely Marie Stuart, of Scotlan the fair Princess Claude, Clarice Strozzi, Mar Fleming, and a young girl who had never before appeared at Court, and had left her conver only a short time, to be received into that day gerous and enchanting place, by her royal kin woman. This was Agnes de la Tour, - one the sweetest, most perfect, and most unfort nate of her sex. To see her, was to adore he and to hear her voice was to be bound in a spell for ever She represented the Sibyl Erytrée, (alas! how often I used to call her by that name!) and her part was to advance towards the Princess Marguerite, then on the eve of marriage with the Duke of Savoy, and in a tone of the most musical sweetness she delivered these lines:—

Le beau rivage, ou mon sumom j'ai pris, Ne produit point de perles de tel prix Que vous, unique et claire Marguerite, Qui voyez tout dessous votre mérite. Heureux trois fois et plus sera le roi Que vos vertus vous promettent—et moi!

"From that moment my heart was entirely her own, and my passion was returned — this is the only happiness I have known — forgive me for dwelling on its dawn,—overcast so soon! Birth, age, fortune, all favoured our attachment, which was first discovered by the King himself, who, happy in the power of rewarding my services and attachment, saw our mutual love with satisfaction. He sent me, on the day when I confessed to him that his suspicions were well founded, a lance, with a message desiring me to use it in my future combats to maintain the supremacy of my fair mistress, dispensing me from that time from the duty of being the Queen's champion, whom I had hitherto so

loyally served. His jesting words were remarkable, although at the time I little heeded them. 'Use this lance,' he wrote, 'dear Montgomery, against the enemies of your fair lady—you need never fear that your King will be one. May the torch of Hymen be more fortunate to you than that with which your father nearly burnt mine, at Blois.' Mysterious fate! it was with that lance I killed him!

"The evening of that day Catherine sent for me. I found her alone in her closet. Her usually calm countenance was pale and haggard, her eyes fierce and wandering, and the whole expression of her face so changed that I could scarcely recognise her. In a hoarse and troubled voice she addressed me,—

"'De Lorges," she said, "'the King has told me that which I find it impossible to believe. I cannot think you so base as to have given cause for his surmise. I am informed that you seek in marriage, Agnes de la Tour, my kinswoman?'

"Madam," I answered, confused by her extraordinary manner, "our attachment has not then been observed by your grace?"

"' Ha!"' exclaimed she, violently, interrupting me, 'you dare then to confess it, you dare to tell me to my face that I am contemned, despised, neglected, cast off for a child, an infant who can compare with me no more than Juno to a slave! you have deceived—undone me!'

"'What mean these words?' I cried in amazement. 'How have I offended your Grace—what have I done to cause this undeserved anger? You whom I honour, reverence, and respect; whom I would defend with my last breath, and against whom none shall dare to utter a thought disloyal, while I have an arm to use in your service.'

"'Hold, miscreant!' cried Catherine, her eyes flashing with indignation: 'drive me not quite mad with this cold cunning, which deceives me not. You know—you have long known the passion I felt for you: my station, my honour, my danger,—nothing could subdue it; and I find too late that I have been played on,—treated with contempt, and made the sport of two ungrateful wretches, who triumph in my shame and my despair. Reply not. You have my secret: may it prove a curse to you! I have loved once; and henceforth my whole life shall be hate. Beware of my revenge! Be secret, and begone!"

"She waved her hand imperiously, and I left her chamber, stupified with amazement and sorrow; indignant at myself, and at the

folly which had for so long a time permitted a veil to remain before my eyes, and concentral from me the real nature of the Queen's friendship. My absorbing love for Agnes made it impossible for me to observe anything but hatself; and the esteem in which I had hitherto hold Catherine, inturally precluded all thought that her numerous favours and marks of distinction meant more than they professed to dis.

"After a night of great anxiety, I prepared. myself to endure as I best might the unjust indignation of the Queen, and my only auxilian: was lest her anger should fall upon my innocutation Agnes. My surprise was therefore great on finding that no further notice was taken by Catherine of the affair. Her former sevenity had returned: she treated me in her want manner before others, and the only difference was that I never saw her alone. She delighted extremely at this time in an Italian musicism, very skilful on the guitar, whom she engaged to give lessons to Agnes, whose voice was tremely fine, and who soon attained great perfection on this instrument. Far from showing any coldness to her, her attentions and kindness appeared to be redoubled, and frequently she would summon me to join the concert when Florio and Mademoiselle de la Tour sang for

her amusement. Soon after, she herself announced to me that the King had ordered everything for our nuptials, which she intended should be very splendid, and would, herself, compose a ballet for the occasion. She appeared to have entirely forgiven and forgotten her disappointment, and to have allowed reason and modesty to resume their sway.

"I was married to Agnes de la Tour, and my happiness was rendered complete by the birth of a son: during all this period we met with nothing but kindness and consideration from the Queen, for the time of her vengeance was not arrived; but it was coming fast, and overtook us when we were secure.

"The days of the fatal tournament arrived; the last morning my Agnes complained of indisposition, and was unable to accompany the rest of the ladies to witness the jousting. I left her with regret, and so dispirited was I, that I endeavoured to excuse myself from joining the combatants, but in vain; my unfortunate renown in various feats of arms, and my success on the preceding days, had piqued the King, who was resolved to engage with me hand to hand, and jestingly desired me to bring the lance he had sent me on the occasion of his discovery of my love. Catherine, by her favourite Florio, on

learning of my wife's illness, sent me a potion, desiring that I should administer it myself, as it was a sovereign remedy. Just before I left her for the last time, I entreated her to take this, and having poured it, myself, into a cup, I stood to see her drink it, and having embraced her hurried away. The dreadful result of that day's pastime all France knows too well,—the King fell, and I saw my ruin. I rushed to my wife's apartments, resolving to lose no time, but to fly instantly with her and my child till the truth should be made manifest, and the excited minds of men became calmed.

"What was my horror to find my adored Agnes a pale and livid corpse, in the spot where I had left her — poisoned by the very draught I had myself given her! My despair knew no bounds; regardless of my own danger, I resolved to remain and perish with her, but the thought of our child changed the current of my thoughts. While I indulged in vain exclamations of grief, several of my friends rushed into the apartment, and used every argument to induce me to fly for my own and for my infant's sake. 'The Queen,' they said, 'has given orders that you shall be instantly secured, and already the guards are on their way to take you; there is no safety but in immediate flight, while the

confusion is still at its height; confide in us, your child shall be cared for, and we pledge ourselves for its security.' The brother of my murdered wife assured me that he would take care that my son should be sent to Anthony of Navarre, my beloved friend and brother in arms. I insisted on carrying him off myself; but they represented that at the infant's tender age to expose it to such danger was certain destruction. I kissed the unconscious creature a thousand times, and left him in the arms of one who had proved herself a faithful friend to my Agnes, and who was the nurse of Prince Charles. She swore to me, that never would she part with that child, while she had life, until she had seen it placed in security. I fled, - and what my life has since been I need not relate to you; a series of struggles and dangers. I married again in England, where my children now are, thank Heaven, safe, under the protection of Elizabeth; but no tidings have I ever had of my first-born son, the son of my lost Agnes. In the vain hope of discovering some traces of his fate I came to Paris after this long lapse of years, and have managed to obtain an interview with Mabille, who still holds her place about the person of Charles. From her my worst fears are confirmed. After I had quitted the fatal spot, Mabille, without loss car time, hurried to her own house, and confiding the infant to her husband returned quickly the palace before her absence was observed. Scarcely had she resumed her place beside ti couch of the voung Prince, when Catherin entered, with expressions of rage and malinity, commanding that my child should be instantly conveyed to her, and, on discovering that it was nowhere to be found, she cannot search to be made wherever I had friends She did not suspect Mabille, who found an early occasion for despatching her husband with the precious charge, and who under cover of his merchandise, was to convey my son to Bearn, where the King of Navarrela protection was certain to await him. He quitted Paris, and was never more heard of! became of him or of my son, Mabille never heard, and no clue is left by which to learn their fate. Catherine's vengeance might have aided our researches, for she left nothing untried to discover what friend had removed him from her power. My possessions were all confiscated, my houses destroyed, and my name branded with infamy; but I have found another country and another home, and little heed her vindictive malice. You may, however, judge.

Admiral, how dangerous a friend she is, and how fatal to those who trust her. I must, if possible, see Mabille once more, and then will leave Paris never to return. Neglect not my counsel, but fly with me; De Montmorency has already retired to Chantilly with his followers; he doubts, and is resolved to be prepared for the treachery which is lurking round us all. This very night I depart."

"De Lorges," said Coligni, "your recital has made a deep impression on me, and I will indeed reflect on all you advise. As soon as morning dawns, I will seek the King once more, and should I see reason to fear I will hesitate no longer."

The friends then parted, and Montgomery, unmarked in his disguise, returned to his retreat in the Rue St. Jacques, while the Admiral prepared to visit King Charles.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CORDELIER.

Les bons et vrais dévots qu'on doit suivre à la trace Ne sont pas ceux aussi qui font tant de grimace. Hé, quoi! vous ne ferez nulle distinction Entre l'hypocrisie et la dévotion?

Malibe

MATHURIN Lussaut the gold-wire drawer. and his pretty wife, Clarice, of whose beauty he was very proud, as well as of his own remarkably handsome head and long curling hair, were at the door of their shop, the sign of the Miroir d'or, and complacently looking up at that brilliant appendage, whose burnished glories flashed in the sun and raised the envy of their less brilliant neighbours, who, having mostly been longer married and longer residents in the Rue St. Jacques, could not exhibit so new and elegant an exterior as the handsomely arranged front of the young tradesman. They were not the only persons at their door:

throughout the whole extent of the long street, as far as the eve could reach, might be seen eager watchers, anxiously expecting the coming of the procession led by the Cardinal de Bourbon, abbé of St. Germain des Prés, which was expected to be more splendid than anything of the kind ever seen. Very little business had been going on for some weeks, every inhabitant of Paris being engaged in sightseeing; a few of the more sober began to wish that the rejoicings were over, as they had too long put a stop to all useful and rational employment. Such was not, however, the opinion of Jean Montault, the host of the Bel Image tavern, whose trade flourished during the festivities, and who could scarcely find hands sufficient to attend to his numerous guests. Cornalet, the grocer, next door, was seen reclining behind his jars, leaning on his elbows, and talking to petit Jacques the cobler, who had suspended his work and had thrust his head and body out of the dark cell in which his avocations were carried on; while Pierre Blampignon the torch-maker, bustled about from one neighbour to the other, recounting a thousand adventures which had lately happened to him, in all of which he appeared to have acted the part of a hero. The general theme of discourse was the late marriage of the Princess Marguerite, and the fêtes which succeeded it. All the speakers proclaimed their share in the events, and it seemed, to hear their relations, that but for their assistance nothing would have gone on well, and every particular individual appeared to be convinced that he had received some especial mark of grace or recognition from the high personages whose notice they had attracted. There was some little discrepancy in their descriptions: one mistaking the Queen-mother for the bride, and another singling out various ladies of the train to represent the two brides; but universal satisfaction was at all events diffused, and everyone was perfectly contented to suppose that his friend had made a mistake and not himself. "I was as close," said Pierre Blampignon, "to the lady Marguerite as I am to you; and, St. Marie! what a presence she has! her hair is exactly the colour of Maître Lussaut's chains, and shines as brightly."

"What mean you?" exclaimed Petit Jacques; "her hair is as black as my shoe."

"And curls all down her back, like a row of corkscrews," added Montault the host.

"I was as close," pursued Blampignon, "to the Bearnais"—

"As wax," interrupted Petit Jacques. "But that his nose is somewhat shorter, I should say he is the moral of neighbour Mamert, the schoolmaster, and nearly as fat."

"Why where did you put your eyes?" cried several voices; "his nose is as long as Le Grand François' himself."

"He is much more like Maître Colin, the embroiderer; but anyhow he looked well in his yellow satin, and so did the young Condé; but the King," said the host of the Bel Image, who was listened to in his quarter as an oracle, "is but poor looking, after all. I like a man portly and commanding, it looks so much better in a procession."

This he said with a complaisant glance towards his own figure, which, adorned as it was with a long and ample apron covering his fullplaited under garments and just reaching to his expansive calf, answered well to his own ideas of majesty.

"I was as close," recommenced Pierre, "to the scaffolding as the guards themselves, and should have had a full view of the Cardinal only that his back was to me; and, just as he was turning round, a great giant of a halberdier, gave me such a thrust, that I was sent head over heels amongst the crowd." Much laughter followed this account of himself, which disconcerted the little torch-maker, who went on to say, that, immediately recovering himself, he rose from the ground, and throwing his cap in the air, cried at the top of his voice, "Vive le Béarnais!" Upon which, he assured his hearers that the Prince, with a gracious smile, nodded his head to him, and appeared much gratified. As much of this climax, added by their boasting friend, as pleased them, was received by the gay audience, who were ready to be amused at anything.

"Be careful, Maître Lussaut," said the cobler "not to carry your wife too near the court in future, for, they say, the young Navarrois is a Diable à quatre for a pretty face."

The blushing Clarice withdrew into her doorway on hearing this piece of gallantry, and her gratified husband invited the party to take a cup to the health of the new-married pair, which was cheerfully agreed to by all, and the host of the "Bel Image" supplied the refreshing draught with alacrity.

"And how," asked Lussaut, "go on the students of late — have there been any more disputes about their right to the Abbot's field?"

"No," answered Montault, "they have been quiet so long, that I think something must soon

happen to keep their hands in or they will forget their old trade of worrying the monks. Well, I do confess, good Catholic as I am, that I always rejoice when the students get the better: they are fine spirited fellows, and ready for any game, while the lazy monks do no good for trade whatever."

"No," said Lussaut, "and so profligate a set are they, that no decent man should let his wife go near them. To be sure, there are good of all sorts: I have a brother of St. Francis lodging in my house now, and a better man cannot live."

"He will do well to keep out of the way of my friends of the University," replied the host, "who respect the Cordeliers so little that they care not for what the cowl covers. I hear there is to be a grand meeting soon of the scholars to fish in the Petit Seine, which, you know, is the great lake in the Pré. If there is not a scuffle with the monks to prevent them, I am mistaken, for they swear no one shall fish there but themselves."

"Well," joined in Pierre Blampignon, "I never could see much difference between the Huguenots and ourselves, except that one eats fish and the other flesh, — but I don't pretend to know much about it."

"Why," returned Montault, "the difference is this: when a man comes to a tavern and asks, 'Well, host, what have you to-day? — any poissons de Bondy, or hareng salé?' I know at once he is a Catholic,—that is, on some days of the week; but if he comes in on a Friday, and calls out, 'Bring me a smoking mess of bouillie, or a pâté de Mayence, and a good bottle of white hypocras,' I see through him at once. But it matters little to me provided he pays; and I cannot think why the King and the Cardinal should make so much fuss about such a trifle. Perhaps, if I were to pronounce, I should say the Catholic is in general the best drinker, and the Huguenot the best eater."

"Well," said petit Jacques, the cobbler, "I hope, without sin, I may say I prefer the heretic; for as he never goes barefoot on a pilgrimage, he must always want shoes."

At this moment a party was seen coming down the street, which Montault recognised as some of his friends the students, and he began to bustle and make preparations for their welcome with great zeal.

"Happy to see you, young masters," he exclaimed, "your visits are rare nowadays. What shall I get for your honours?"

"All you have," exclaimed several of the

party; "we are resolved to have a day of it, as this is to be the last; so spare nothing. Belcastel treats."

As this was said the young student in question threw a well-filled purse to the landlord, calling out in a ringing musical voice, "Here, old Montault, touche là, take this, — for a few hours hence we may not recollect quite clearly what is owing. Quick! bring us plenty of wine, for we want to be in spirits to greet our old friends the Cordeliers, who will, no doubt, appear in the full force of hypocrisy in a few minutes with all the pious of Paris at their heels."

In effect, as Belcastel spoke, the sound of musical instruments was heard announcing the approach of the solemn procession, expected with the same anxiety as any other of the numerous pageants which inundated the city of Paris at that moment of rejoicing. Religious feeling was, for the time, quite forgotten in the delight of witnessing the singular and magnificent spectacle which vied with the profane shows got up for the entertainment of the people. First came a band of musicians dressed in flowing robes, richly embroidered, and performing airs of so lively a description, that they might well have suited a less solemn occasion.

Their nature, however, occasionally changed to slow and serious as they passed any of the numerous monastic or ecclesiastical buildings on their route, and as the train was joined by different members of other fraternities. All the children that could be collected in the Faubourg St. Germain walked barefooted, dressed in white, with garlands of flowers on their heads, each child bearing a lighted torch of wax. This part of the ceremony was extremely beautiful, and a murmur of applause from all greeted the innocent and graceful bands of little penitents, whose rosy faces and smiling lips seemed to contradict the remorse which was supposed to inspire them for sins already or about to be committed. A countless concourse of monks. of the orders of Capucins, Augustins, Penitens Blanc, Jacobins, and others, was followed by the priests of St. Sulpice and the monks of St. Germain. All these were allowed by the students to pass quietly; but when a long line of Cordeliers of St. Francis drew near, it was with the utmost difficulty that the prudent host could restrain the impertinent sallies of the students. A spectacle, however, now appeared, which at once put his authority to flight, and indeed created great scandal amongst all the lookers-on, for it was a custom fallen somewhat

into disuse, and now revived in order to attract more attention to those religious observances which the stricter order of Catholics feared were being neglected. The seven shrines of St. Germain, containing relics of the most sacred nature, were borne along by a great number of monks, almost naked, having, in fact, nothing on but a shirt,-their arms, legs, and feet exposed: in this guise they walked slowly along, chanting hymns, and appearing in a state of ecstatic devotion. At this sight a volley of abuse burst from the lips of the young students; and so far did their insolence carry them, that a quantity of dried peas and beans, with which they were provided, were used to pelt these extraordinary penitents, accompanied by shouts of derision. However, they were at length prevailed on to be reasonable; and, after some contention with the soldiers who attended on this part of the procession, to which some opposition had evidently been anticipated, the holy band of brothers passed on. The Cardinals of Bourbon and Vendôme, followed by a train of meaner dignitaries, closed the scene, and a mixed multitude of idlers, thieves, rioters, and inquisitive gazers, rushed tumultuously through the streets, much to the annovance and disturbance of the neighbourhood.

As the students were seated at the open window of the tavern, they were able to observe all the passers-by, and after having indulged in much vituperation of the scene they had just witnessed, began to amuse themselves with jokes upon the passengers. Belcastel, who seemed their leader, was a young man of handsome figure and fresh complexion, and with a lively, careless, and independent expression of countenance, frank and prepossessing: his spirits were of the lightest kind, and he looked ready for any frolic that might be proposed. Nothing, however, very tempting appeared, and he suggested that, after finishing their bottle, they should adjourn to the Porte de Bussi, to see the feats of the Italian juggler, with whose performances of throwing the assaguay all Paris had been lately amused. They accordingly sallied out into the street, and had not proceeded far when they observed a Cordelier advancing on the opposite side.

"Hallo! friend," cried one of them, "what do you here? Go back, the penitents are gone the other way. Do you think you have no sins to answer for, that you turn your back upon the holy train?"

The monk continued his way without noticing them, when Belcastel said to his companions,— "Comrades, this fellow seems insolent; one of you go and invite him to our grand fishing in the Pré, and see what answer he will make."

A shout of laughter followed, and several of the students, arm in arm, crossed over to the monk, and barred his passage, addressing him in no very reverend manner.

- "Young men," he answered, "let me pass: I do not interrupt you, and cannot be detained."
- "Indeed!" said they, "we will see that. You shall turn back when you are told, and learn to obey the monarchs of the Basoche, though you think to lord it with your cord and cowl over all the other crowns of the earth."

So saying, they attempted to seize the Cordelier, who, stopping suddenly short, with one blow of his hand swept two of the foremost from his path. "Go, fools!" he exclaimed. "Is this the way you waste the spirit which should lead you to defend your country and your liberties? By such follies as this is France subdued and sunk!"

"What meddling priest dares to say aught against France or Frenchmen?" cried Belcastel, advancing, — while the rest surrounded the monk, and with threats and exclamations tried to force him to turn back with them, vowing

that they would carry him to his superior and see discipline inflicted on him for his sins.

"Idiots!" exclaimed the Cordelier, "you know not what you do, nor the mischief to a good cause by detaining me. If there are any Protestants amongst you, as I judge," he continued, "know that you are insulting a friend, and you may soon stand in need of more than you imagine."

"Stand back, gentlemen," said a voice from the crowd which was by this time assembled and enjoying the fray,— and a young man pushing through them, advanced to the students. "This is not fair play," said he, "the Cordelier is one to twenty, and so I take his side were he ten times a monk."

"Ha! Claude, is it you," cried Belcastel, "as usual, always with the weakest; but this is our business, not yours; besides you are no longer one of us, and we are resolved to have our way."

"Not if I can prevent it," said Claude, "you are wrong; this monk offered you no interruption and he shall pass free."

"Well said, young champion," exclaimed the monk, "but give yourself no trouble, I am in no danger from these gentlemen, who already draw back, and are ready to hear reason." "Down with him!" cried a fierce voice,
"down with the thief who calls himself a friend
to the Huguenots! we will have no more heretics to give us laws while there are good Catholies amongst us."

"Who speaks against the Huguenots?" cried a dozen of the excited students, who, ready for any fray, cared little what was its object.

"Tis Crucé, the butcher," answered one sear; "he is drunk as usual, heed him not." But the conflict had already begun.

Crucé, a gigantic fellow, with his sleeves tucked up to the elbow, displaying his muscular arms, advanced to the Cordelier, whom he seized, with the intent of throwing him down; but to the surprise of all, his grasp was arrested by that of the monk, who, throwing his gown over his arm, sprang upon him, and in a moment felled him to the earth.

"Well done, Cordelier!" cried the crowd, with whom Crucé was in no particular veneration, being known as a brawler and ruffian.

"Give way," cried the monk, "and disperse to your homes; there will be more serious work for you all soon; hold yourselves prepared,—and you, young men of the Religion, be upon your guard, and know your friends from your enemies."

So saying, and with a look of approbation towards Claude, he disappeared amongst the crowd; but not before the revengeful eye of Crucé had tracked him till he entered the shop of Mathurin Lussaut.

Belcastel and some of his friends, with looks somewhat ashamed and disconcerted, now greeted Claude as an old acquaintance, for all the young men of the different colleges professed, to a certain degree, the defence of a common cause against the monks of St. Germain des Prés. And though Claude and Belcastel had not studied together, they had been long known to each other, before either of them came to Paris: the former, however, being by far the more studious, seldom joined in any of the noisy sallies of the companions of Belcastel, and they had not met for some time. Resisting their importunities to join a revel which they had resolved to indulge in, Claude, after a brief conversation, left them, and they separated different ways.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ASSASSIN.

Where is the villain?—let me see his eyes, That when I note another such a man I may avoid him.

SHAKSPEARE.

CLAUDE was returning near the gates of the Louvre, when he remarked a cavalcade of gentlemen issuing from the palace, and observed that the Admiral de Coligny was at their head. He followed the way they took, gratified to see how cheerful and contented the whole party appeared, which circumstance, after the sinister reports which had of late prevailed, was pecuharly cheering, as he doubted not that they had just parted from the King, and had reason to be satisfied with their interview. The Admiral's expressive countenance was highly animated, and he seemed to be repeating some mecdote which excited great merriment amongst his companions. The train proceeded along the Rue des Fossés St. Germain, and as they rode quickly, they had considerably preceded Claude, who stood up as they passed him, when on a sudden the report of a pistol struck his ear, and loud exclamations followed. Instant confusion prevailed amongst the crowd of horsemen, and as Claude hurried to the spot he perceived with horror that the Admiral had fallen to the ground, covered with blood, and was supported by several of his friends. At the same instant shouts of "Coligni is murdered!" echoed from mouth to mouth.

It was soon discovered that his left arm was frightfully shattered, and one finger of his right hand shot away. Without, however, showing the least emotion of pain, he pointed in the direction of the house from which the fatal aim appeared to have been taken, and a rush was immediately made towards it: a crowd soon assembled, some of the enraged bystanders, uttering loud cries, thundered for admittance at the doors; others endeavoured to scale the walls, and enter by the windows. The suspected house was one belonging to the Canon de Villemur, formerly preceptor of the Duke de Guise. Cries of "Down with Guise!down with the assassins!" echoed on all sides, as, with a loud crash, the door of entrance was forced in, and the mob gained possession.

While some rushed up the stairs and into the front rooms, Claude by chance, who, excited by grief and rage, had been one of the first to gain admission, penetrated to the back part of the house, where, finding the doors fastened outside, he leaped from a window which he succeeded with difficulty in opening, and springing with the rapidity and agility of a mountaineer over the wall, which separated him from a small court, caught a glimpse of a man hastily mounting a horse, which was held by another, who seemed urging him to use diligence, and the words, "Well aimed, Maurevel!" struck his ear. The next instant he darted forward, but the horseman was already out of sight, and the person who had assisted him was flying with the utmost precipitation. The voice which had uttered those few words was familiar to Claude's ear; the figure of the fugitive was not less so. With a swiftness which seemed like that of lightning, he pursued him along the cloisters of the building, and with a sudden spring seized him in a powerful grasp, from which he endeavoured to free himself in vain, while Claude recognized, with a shudder of horror and an exclamation of indignation, the features of René Bianco.

[&]quot;Villain! - traitor!" cried Claude, "you

are my prisoner. You have named your accomplice, and there remains but to confess who is your employer."

"Claude," exclaimed René, struggling violently, "what means this treatment? — do you know me?"

"I know you," cried Claude, " for an assassin and a coward, and will deliver you to the justice which awaits you."

He then called loudly, and endeavoured to drag the Italian towards the house.

"Unhand me!" fiercely shrieked René; "unhand me, or my dagger shall teach you wisdom."

"I fear you not," retorted Claude, "though it were as deadly as all the poisons of your accursed land can make it. Murderer, you shall be known!"

"Beware!" said René in a low voice, as he clenched his teeth, and his countenance became livid with malignity, "beware how you make me your enemy. The Admiral is not the only victim: there are yet many in store, and you shall not be forgotten. Once more, loose your hold!

—But it matters not — If they take me, what have I to fear?"

The loud exclamations of Claude had by this time brought to the spot a numerons party. Bianco was instantly secured, and it was with some difficulty that the mob was prevented from doing summary justice upon him when Claude related the circumstances of his capture, and the assistance he had afforded to the probable assassin. After having given the required promise to appear in evidence against him when called upon, he quitted the scene, and hurried home, agitated with thoughts of the most alarming nature, and fears for the future which seemed but too likely to be realized.

The attempted assassination was soon the universal theme throughout Paris, and great consternation and grief ensued: the wounds of the Admiral, though severe, were not mortal, but the fact of the crime having been perpetrated struck terror into the minds of all. The Duke de Guise was openly accused, as it was well known that he had never abandoned the belief that the Admiral was guilty of the death of his father, through the means of Poltrot, however clearly the contrary had been proved. When the news was brought to King Charles, his fury knew no bounds: he hesitated not to name his mother, his brother, and all their partisans, as the authors of the deed; and it was only when Catherine, after allowing the first burst of feeling to subside, sought his presence,

and, joining with him in indignant exclamations of sorrow and regret, proposed that they should go together to visit the sick-bed of the victim of De Guise, that he was pacified. Accordingly, with every demonstration of grief and affection, the royal party repaired to the Admiral's lodgings, and there by his bed side poured out their expressions of attachment and lamentation: and before they quitted him, the King insisted upon supplying him with a party of his own guards to protect him against the future designs of his enemy. Accordingly a strong force arrived, and was posted at the Admiral's gates; and the Protestant party, grateful for so much consideration, filled the air with acclamations. as the King, his face covered with tears and trembling with emotion, returned in his carriage with the Queen Mother to the palace. Scarcely, however, had they arrived there, when the mask was thrown off: subdued and terrified. Charles listened to the artful details given him by his mother of discovered plots, traitorous designs, and wicked devices of the Admiral and his party.

"These pestilent Huguenots," said Catherine, "enemies to God and man, have been plotting our destruction ever since we admitted them to our friendship. Instead of being sensible of the indulgence we have extended towards them, their sole aim is to wrest the power from our hands. They have powerful leaders, and are not wanting in either spirit or cunning: not only have they sworn to exterminate our religion, but a solemn compact has been entered into, to destroy and utterly root out the race of Valois. You, my beloved son, are to be the first victim. I know, from certain information, that your life is not safe one hour, and the whole of their designs are of so monstrous a kind that human nature shudders to reflect on them."

"But," said the unfortunate King, "what are their resources? are they not all here as our guests, as our friends? are we not stronger than they? and could we not at once put them down with a firm hand, rather than take them off man by man."

"Charles," answered Catherine, "you are deceived. The Admiral has already sent despatches to Germany and Switzerland, where twenty thousand men are at his disposal. If these troops join the malcontents we are fostering in our bosom, destitute as your Grace is at this moment of men and money to meet so sudden and powerful an outbreak, what is to become of France and the kingdom?"

"But why not hear the Admiral,—why not side with the Protestants and do them justice?" urged Charles. "I have given my word to assist them—to treat them as my subjects, and to see that all parties are satisfied."

A sneer passed over Catherine's features. "I thought so," she continued, "they are too artful for your inexperience; trust in me; and know, my dear Charles, that we have many Catholic subjects equally ready to take advantage of popular commotion; at this moment they are only waiting for a demonstration of friendship from you towards the Huguenot party, and they are ready to elect a captaingeneral, and to make a league, offensive and defensive, against their enemies. Where then is your power? where is your authority in the kingdom? Appease this fury, show your people that you can indeed govern; let not childish compassion veil your eyes; look upon your own peril, and join with me to avert it! Charles," she added, solemnly, observing the impression she had made, " hear all from me. It was not the Duke de Guise alone, armed with vengeance for his father's murder, it was my hand that directed this blow, and would, that all your enemies were collected in one head, that I might crush them as Coligni must be crushed."

Charles heard the last fearful words with a start of mingled horror and astonishment, and as she ended buried his face in his hands, and shiver passed through his frame; in a few moments he looked up, and his mother, in her turn, was surprised at the livid look and appalling expression of his face. He started from his seat, and with a loud laugh tossed his arms above his head, exclaiming in a furious voice,-"Is it so? is it so? I am then cajoled and deceived, and played upon by all; but they shall see it is not with impunity. By the death of that God who knows friends from foes - by the hopes of my distracted soul, - and by my fear of eternal torture. I dedicate them to destruction - all - all !- If it was right to kill the Admiral, why should any escape - why should one accursed Huguenot exist in France? Let them all perish from the face of the earth; -leave not one alive to reproach me - let me never behold an accusing eye; but exteminate the rebels and traitors like a swarm of locusts. Give orders - no delay-no pause; be prompt and firm - give my orders for immediate execution - allow me no time to relapse into apathy - obey me at once. To you, my mother, I delegate my authority; - whatever your superior and all-comprehensive judgment suggests, follow. I am unfit to advise,

— I am unfit to reflect — let me hear that the
enemies of my throne and my religion have no
longer a name in France!"

Exhausted with his exertion, and the frantic thoughts which had excited it, Charles, as he finished uttering this fearful mandate, fell senseless on the floor, at the feet of his exulting mother, who, as she ordered him to be carefully conveyed to his chamber and every assistance rendered him, exclaimed to her friends,

"We have conquered! — the work has now only to go on."

Half an hour after that interview, the Catholic inhabitants of the streets in the neighbourhood of the Admiral's dwelling, were ordered to give up their houses and accommodations to his Protestant adherents. A muster-roll was made in every part of Paris, and the deceived members of the Religion were exhorted to seek safety against the barbarous plans of the party of Guise, in the protection of their friend the King. The King of Navarre was requested to send all the soldiers of his party, and all the people he could spare to the Louvre, as the Court entreated his assistance against the suspected Guises. All these precautions succeeded to admiration; the enthusiasm of the Protestants was at its

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height, at the generous conduct of King Charles, and their loyalty excited to defend him from the measing danger.

One circumstance alone caused general surprise and dissatisfaction. Many attempted to explain it by affirming that the whole affair had originated in mistake; yet it was not without comment that René Bianco was seen to take his station about the person of the Queenmother, as usual, after having been detained only a few hours in custody.

CHAPTER XIV.

LES CARRIERES DE ST. JACQUES.

Of horrid shapes and sights and deeds unholy.

MILTON.

THE city of Paris stands upon an exhausted quarry, which extends for leagues beneath the surface, its hollow caverns and vaulted chambers spreading far and wide. Formerly the sight of the catacombs gave an idea of their vastness: but as that avenue is closed, their mysterious wonders are now left to the imagination, which can scarcely exaggerate their fearful depth and appalling length. The variety of forms assumed by the huge blocks of stone left rugged from excavation, might suggest images of unknown hideousness, but within the centre of the rocks have for ages been discovered the fossil remains of antediluvian monsters far more extraordinary and frightful than fancy alone could frame. These, when found in early times, when learning was confined to a

few, naturally gave rise to fables, which soon obtained belief amongst the vulgar, ever ready to credit marvellous reports, and, by degrees, it became an article of faith that the carrières were haunted to their utmost extent by demons, who kept up a continual sabbath with witches, conjurers, and other weird beings.

The monks, in the monasteries situated without the town, such as those of St. Germain des
Près, Nôtre Dame des Champs, and others, did
not discourage these superstitious notions, as
the exercise of their powers in driving away
the fiends gave them opportunities which they
were not slow to embrace. For centuries, the
existence of these caverns had been turned to
account by the priests who officiated in the
temples which formerly rose where numerous
monasteries now appeared; and it is even possible that the Druids made use of them in
carrying on their holy cheats.

Amongst other mysterious beings supposed to inhabit and frequent the carrières, it was currently believed that the celebrated Idole St. Germain, which had disappeared from the altar in the church of St. Germain des Prés in the year 1514, had been borne away by the demons who were its servants, and was now enshrined beneath the monastery in one of the loftiest

and most remote of the halls of hewn stone which that labyrinthine region presented.

This figure had been known to keep its station in the church of St. Germain for years uncounted, and was held in great awe by all who entered the sacred precincts. Placed with its back against the southern wall, of which it appeared to form a part, this gigantic shape, rearing its huge dimensions almost to the roof, seemed to be kept immovable by the sight of the large crucifix of the altar. It presented the semblance of a female, gaunt, thin, and haggard, with dishevelled hair, and with a severe countenance. Its enormous limbs were bound rather than concealed by a thin veil clinging close to the shape, and at its base was an inscription which had been explained to mean, - " I am all that has been and that is: no mortal has ever drawn aside my veil!"

Long had the frowning idol been retained within the church, apparently with a view to warn the true believer against the dangers of paganism, and it was looked upon as the impersonation of evil, and passed with fear and trembling: few dared to raise their eyes to its sinister stony countenance, but hurried on to cast themselves at the foot of the cross, where St. Germain himself stood in his niche, pointing

sternly towards the heathen statue whom the potency of religious belief had subdued.

There was in the convent a learned monk who was its sacristan, called John the Wise,for few secrets in nature or art were hidden from him, and he one day waited on the Abbot to reveal to him what his great knowledge had discovered. He related that of late as he was accustomed to enter the church in the dead of night to pray, he had several times been startled by extraordinary sounds, and words uttered in a language which he had never familiarly heard before, but which his learning told him was that of the ancient Egyptians. He had carefully concealed himself behind the carved pillars which circled the great idol, whose grotesque mouldings seemed to have some connexion with her awful form, and there he had at length been witness to a scene which filled him with amazement.

A part of the most antique portion of the sacred edifice had appeared to shake with sudden throes; the heavy pavement sank by degrees, and disclosed a yawning chasm beneath, from whence issued a train of persons, whose appearance was so remarkable that at first he could hardly credit the evidence of his senses. They walked one by one, and were clothed in

drapery very similar to that worn by the idol: some of them had heads of birds, others those of dogs, but their bodies were human; they marched slowly to the muffled sound of instruments such as he had never heard played before, and whose shapes were only known to him in the rolls of papyrus over which he was in the habit of poring. When the procession had reached the foot of the idol, all bowed down before it, and uttered words which he only imperfectly understood; but they seemed to imply that the period of her release was at hand, and that the reign of Isis would once more return. They conjured her to follow them, and informed her that a temple was prepared in the region from whence they had arrived, where she would be honoured by fitting votaries who were impatient for her presence. The great idol was for a long time unmoved, but on a sudden her stony eyes rolled in their sockets, her lips began to move, and she bowed her head in token of assent.

"My Lord Abbot," said friar John the Wise, "the Pagan image has not lifted its head from the position in which that action left it, and you may now behold it as I have described."

The Abbot, greatly astounded, summoned every member of the community, and in a

body they hastened to the church, where they saw, with extreme terror, that the chin of the gigantic image rested on its breast, and its stony eyes appeared detached from their sockets.

The Abbot lost no time in calling to his aid all the powers of the church: the image was exorcised, and masses and prayers innumerable were said to avert the evil threatened in the vision. Still there stood the grande Idole, with its head bent; and for three nights longer nothing occurred to indicate evil.

On the fourth day a grand procession was to take place, and after having made the round of the city, was to return to the high altar of St. Germain, where a solemn mass was to be celebrated. Just as the Abbot at the head of his train was entering the aisle, a tremendous sound was heard, as if a huge mass of stone was thrown upon the pavement, and amidst the flicker of the tapers and the flare of the torches, an indistinct form appeared moving near the circle of pillars where the Grande Idole rested against the wall: three times the thundering noise was repeated, as though of the steps of some huge animal, and a peal as of thunder shook the building. The priests and monks in terrified confusion rushed to various places of shelter; but the Abbot and Jean le Sage, the Sacristan, regardless of danger, went on.

On approaching the upper end of the aisle, what was their amazement to discover the place of the *Grande Idole* vacant, and no trace of her left in the church where she had for so many centuries resided.

From that period she was never heard of, and it became a crime to make mention of her: by degrees therefore her memory sank into oblivion, and the circumstances of her disappearance were retained only by a few.

As these facts faded in men's minds, a simpler account was generally given, which satisfied the generality of people.

This was merely that the Sacristan, having reported to the Abbot that he had seen a woman on her knees before the idol, holding a branch of lighted candles, he interrogated her, and found that she had met with some trifling loss, which the mischievous students of St. Germain des Prés had persuaded her to inform the idol of, who would indicate to her where it was to be found. This statement induced the Abbot to command the demolition of the antique statue; and it was accordingly removed from its place in the church, and, some accounts agreed, was broken to pieces.

There were, however, as has been said, inhabitants of the carrières at a later period who knew the fate of the great idol, and knew also that the prediction of those strange Egyptians was come to pass; for she was worshipped in a subterranean temple as the Mère de Mal, and her votaries were many and powerful, for they were no other than the fraternity which went by the name of "Les Mauvais Garçons," being simply all the robbers, pickpockets, coiners, murderers, and other malefactors of Paris, who found safety from pursuit in the murky retreats of those dreary abodes,—as to follow them into their dens was a service of danger not to be attempted by the uninitiated.

The caverns of the Chemin d'Issy and d'Enfer had long possessed the reputation of being peopled by myriads of infernal spirits, as the noises they made sufficiently testified, and the Diable de Vauvert was an accredited imp in whom it were treason to disbelieve. There were communications between almost all these widely separated excavations, known only to the gloomy habitants of the place, and never revealed to the dwellers on upper earth. Those of the Carrières St. Jacques were amongst the most considerable, and it was to one of the most frequented parts of that region that the Florentine,

from durance, than he repaired Jacques, and entered the shop butcher, situated nearly at the e street leading to the route d'Orle "Oh! you are come at last,"

"Oh! you are come at last," a gruff voice, as he entered; "have been waiting for you, and be patient; so little work has been that the trade does not thrive, and to murmur. It's hard a man car calling: what's the use of Court fr to be poorer than ever."

"As usual, grumbling ever!"
a gay tone; "but I have new
brighten up all your hearts,— ay,
lose no time either. Let us ins
quarries, where I suppose Captain
ready arrived!"

"Ancelin, the dwarf, was her answered Crucé, "and tells me

Growling and surly, the gigantic ruffian took a small lamp from a hook in his shop, which he gave to René, and provided himself with another, and after fastening his door and window proceeded with the Italian to the back court of his house, where, at the foot of a small round tower built into the newer walls which surrounded it, he entered a cellar with his companion, and by the help of his lamp discovered a flat stone, which he raised by pressing his foot upon one corner, and a dark flight of steps was evident beneath it. These they descended together, and groped along a dark passage for nearly a quarter of a mile, occasionally coming to openings, wide and rugged, which their lamps served to show in all their gloom. Sometimes they had to climb over huge blocks of slippery sandstone, on which the continual dropping from the roof fell in streams: here and there yawning chasms appeared beneath their feet, whose depth it was fearful to imagine, and high arches and vaults seemed to conduct to different chambers, where nothing but blackness was perceptible, and where numerous bats, scared by the lights they carried, flitted along with short, shrill cries.

"Mort Dieu!" said René, "these quarries are most convenient places, - what would the

fraternity do without them?—but I must confess it is not quite so pleasant or so easy to walk amongst them, as upon the marble floor of the Louvre."

"I dare say not," said Crucé, with a sneer; "but if you were flying for your life, and I after you, with my good axe in hand, as many a one has done before now—I fancy you'd get on a little faster than you do. However, we are nearly arrived at the Trou de malaise, where the band are waiting for us. Hilloa! ho! ho!" and as he spoke, he exalted his voice, and the echoes round took up the sound which soon reached the ears to which it was intended to convey a note of greeting.

A responding shout was returned, and, after a little more climbing and slipping, the pair were in the presence of their comrades.

The chamber or hall in which the confraternity were all assembled, presented features of great peculiarity. It was one of the largest and highest of the many around, and formed, as it were, the centre of a star, from which numerous rays diverged, for in every direction spread out, in long lines of darkness, mysterious paths, conducting to other caves at different distances. The fire which burnt in the middle of this cave, threw upon the surrounding walls a glare of fitful light, which exhibited its decorations in startling clearness.

Opposite the entrance, towering to the roof, stood the Mère de Mal herself, as hideous and fearful as when she scared the faithful in the Church of St. Germain des Prés: hung round at various heights were exhibited monstrous skeleton forms, dug at different times out of the quarries, some appearing of the shape and size of crocodiles, but having attached to their scaly backs enormous fan-formed wings, others like hogs, but of gigantic proportions, and with horns and tusks of wondrous strength: a few bore the semblance of toads, but larger than the largest tortoise, with grinning mouths and long sharp claws. Some were like birds, with necks elongated in an incredible manner, and with heads almost human in their hideousness. Instruments of various kinds were piled on the floor, and weapons in heaps were to be seen scattered about.

At the vaulted entrance of this cavern stood a man of middle age, dressed in the ordinary garb of a mechanic, but who, from the command he appeared to take over the rest, seemed to be the chief person there. He was greeted by Bianco as Maistre Larondelle, and a somewhat surly recognition took place between the butcher, Crucé and this worthy, intended, however, to convey expressions of good fellowship.

He marshalled his guests into the interior, where, in groups, some seated round the fire, some standing or reclining near their grim-looking household gods, a party of not less than fifty men were discovered.

A murmur of satisfaction ran through their ranks, as Larondelle named Bianco, and a tall man, wrapped in a large dark mantle, starting forward, embraced him, uttering words in Italian expressive of his pleasure in meeting an old friend. The dress of this man was peculiar; as his cloak was thrown aside it revealed a highly ornamented garb, where gold embroidery and rich colours were conspicuous. In his partycoloured sash he wore pistols and two daggers; his high-crowned hat was much pulled over his eyes. across its crown was a bunch of hawk's-feathers placed in front, and ribbons of various hues adorned it to the top of the cone. Some of the many he introduced to René as his followers. and described them as gentlemen of fortune, escaped, like himself, from the galleys not long since, and now fully prepared to execute any scheme which might be proposed for their profit and the good of the community. René addressed him as Captain Florio; congratulated him on his fortunate escape from his enemies, and took upon himself to make him better known to the assembled party, with whom, he would probably in future, have much in common.

"This," said René, presenting to him the short, thick-set, low-browed man of scowling spect who presided, "this, you must know, is my good friend Larondelle the coiner, director of our band, and chief adviser, who has done much service to the company, and whose ingenuity is equal to his courage."

This was received with a suppressed laugh by some present, to whom the latter quality attributed to this distinguished individual was not so well known as the former. Larondelle thank back with a dissatisfied glance, while Reaé continued:

"This is Aignan Thué the mercer, who has a good shop of his own in the Rue des Carmes, not far from the dwelling of the good Fathers, whose example has greatly benefited his morals. And here I am proud to see my excellent commade Ancelin, who resides in any part of Paris where he conceives he may be most useful to his neighbours, and whose general knowledge of the locality those of your troop who may not be well acquainted with Paris will find most valuable."

The figure who was the object of René's present discourse was a diminutive man with a large head, long arms, and body squeezed into a small round shape like that of a spider. He had squinting eyes, and very projecting teeth, of which he appeared proud, for he was in the habit of constantly exhibiting them, having apparently so lively a disposition that the slightest circumstance excited his risibility. He was an especial favourite with his friends, being prone to entertain them with the most amusing details of various feats of mischief he was in the daily habit of performing, and being unwearied in the pursuit of any object which was pointed out to him as worthy of employing his talents.

"This respectable tradesman," resumed René, indicating a fierce dogged-looking man in a corner of the cave, on whom the light of the fire shone and gleamed on his rugged features and red hair,—"is Flé, the butcher of the quartier St. Jacques, who is also captain of that district, his good conduct having recommended him to the discriminating magistrates who preserve order amongst our fellow townsmen; and this is the celebrated Captain Roy, truly a king of good-fellows, who resides in a remote quarter, but grudges neither time nor distance to serve the cause he has embraced.

The rest of our friends I have no doubt congemality of feeling will soon make known to you: to enumerate them would take too much time, which is precious with us all. I must immediately proceed to inform you of the object for which we are here assembled, and I am sure it is one in which you will all rejoice."

The banditti crowded round him as he spoke, and eagerly listened to his harangue.

"Many of you no doubt remember the times before the first son of Henry II. reigned, when b meet a Huguenot in the street was to attack in; when to see the door of a Huguenot's house open was to enter and pillage it, and when to inform against a meeting of these hereits was to secure honour and fortune to you, and the stake or the river to them. These happy days have been expiring by degrees; but you will be surprised to know that even at this instant, when the two parties are just united in the strictest bonds of amity, they are to be revived. You look incredulous but hear me. They are suspected, or said to be suspected, it matters not what the truth be, of having conspired against the state: their plots are discovered, and instead of the massacre of thousands of good Catholics which they intended to perpetrate, it is resolved that 70L L

the same drama shall be acted by the true believers. To be brief, the hour is fixed, and when the clock strikes two on the eve of St. Bartholomew, the work must begin — nor will it end until not a single Huguenot is left in Paris, nay, throughout France, for the word is already given, and in every province the same execution will take place. Be ready, then, my friends, to contribute your share to the general good, and hold yourselves prepared to obey the King's commands, and gain booty and honour."

A loud shout of approbation interrupted his discourse, and cries of "Long live Charles the Ninth!" "Down with the Huguenots!" resounded through the caverns, while some of the new comers, who were Italians, Spaniards, Corsicans, and natives of all nations, devoutly crossed themselves, at which action the free-thinking part of the fraternity, or those who were in the habit of paying their vows to La Mère de Mal, were amused or disgusted as the case might be.

"But what has become of Maurevel?" inquired Thué the mercer: "has he made good his escape?"

"Yes," replied Captain Roy, "the fool has got safely off; but he deserved to be taken for missing so near a shot." "True," said René; "but he did his best.

It was not my fault that you were not employed: the deed would have been done at eace, and much trouble spared; but Guise insisted on his man, and we were obliged to agree. However, there will be no failure now, as our plans are excellent."

"How came it that the groom who brought Marrevel his horse was allowed to be taken?" aked Crucé sulkily.

"That," replied Bianco, "is a mere pretance; he will be released immediately: it was tally to give a colour to the proceedings, and to bemour the King, who could not be gained wer at first; but he consents to anything now. You see, my friends," he continued, "we shall have great opportunities; if any little private affair has annoyed us, it can be settled without trouble, for how can it be prevented that some Catholics should fall in the confusion, and who is to inquire how they met their fate?"

"Oh excellent—brave thought!" giggled the dead Ancelin; "I have two or three little matters which I shall be glad to set at rest."

"And I," growled Crucé: — " there can be no harm in pulling off the hood of a Cordelier if one can catch him, I suppose?"

- "By no means," said René; "every man is at liberty to use his discretion."
- "I shall use mine," muttered Flé. "There are more butchers than are necessary in the Rue St. Jacques, and to get rid of a few will make the trade flourish all the better."
- "Ha, ha!" screamed Anselm, "what a comical fellow you are; it does me good to hear you. I suppose we need none of us fear to show ourselves in Paris now, as the way is so nicely paved for us?"
- "I advise," said René, "that you all keep as close as you conveniently can till midnight on the 24th, when you can come forth, and circumstances can guide your movements. I shall require some of your aid as I propose to be very busy in the mêlée, having some interesting business to transact which will require experienced hands."
- "Command us!" cried several voices: "we are yours for any service."

It was then agreed between them when and where the chosen friends of René were to meet; and having discussed several other questions, the favourite of Queen Catherine took his leave, returning by another outlet to St. Jacques du Haut Pas, from whence he speedily made his way across the faubourg, and regained the route

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which led to the river: as he prudently concluded that it might be as well to avoid being seen by the neighbours of Crucé leaving his domicile at so late an hour as that at which he and his worthy companions separated.

CHAPTER N

THE HOTEL D'HERCL

Perplex'd in the extre

WHILE these scenes were the carrières of the city of I of Guise, to whom the princip of the whole business had bee. Queen Mother, and who accept the charge which placed his dete power, was busied in preparing gedy in which he was to disting Great had been the discomfiture on learning from him the service them, which were at first so cau nicated, that they were at a loss them.

then, that secret and cautious measures should be taken not only to defeat but to punish them; and as they were known to be very powerful, it would be advisable to observe the utmost care lest they should perceive that their designs were discovered.

"At midnight, therefore," said the Duke, on the night of the 24th, assemble all the toptains of the different quarters of Paris, and impart to them the news of this diabolical plot; them know that we are in danger — that all be princes and nobles of the Catholic faith live sit were in the midst of a mine, which threatat every instant to blow up and scatter us to the winds. Tell them that we have delibeated and have come to the decision that the method of delivering ourselves from the penevering treason of these heretics is by one great blow to rid the country of them for ever. Let the signal of slaughter be the tocsin of the city, as with us it shall be the bell of St. Germin de l'Auxerrois: when that strikes two, let man fall upon his neighbour, and, without distinction of age or station, kill every traitor be meets with. Let the Catholics be distinsuited from their foes by a white cross on their hats and a white handkerchief on their left arm; the sleeve of their right must be tucked Marcel hear these orders, an seek to obtain exemption fro ly and angrily De Guise insi ing to them a written order from scruples were at length apparent to take and they departed to take measures for the execution of eloquence and art of the enemi nate Huguenots had convinced sary for the preservation of Fra Nantouillet, the Prévôt de 1

Nantouillet, the Prévôt de l occupied in his hotel, on the Qu he had just taken a survey of all walked with elated mien through ed galleries, where were represent of Hercules, which circumstance name to the house. These justly celebrated, and indeed it wart to be carried beyond the arch ments of experient.

in riches, for an immense sum, paid to the crown; for the Hotel was one of those which had been confiscated, in consequence of the attainder of its original master, the unfortunate Count de Montgomery, for whose marriage it had been furnished in so splendid a manner. A few additions made to it by the rich citizen had added, if not to its classical beauty, at least to its gorgeousness, and just at this period nothing was more talked of than the magnificance of this abode. Nantouillet was always proud of his possessions, but had never been more so than lately, since the King had condescended to promise him a visit.

"I will," said he, mentally, "give those princes such a fête as they have seldom seen before, and exhibit to them such a store of plate as will amaze them, for I flatter myself there are not many Parisians who can afford to entertain them in greater style. Madame Marion," said he, to his housekeeper, "take special care that everything is in the best order, for since his Grace deigns to bonour me, I would fain show him something worth the trouble of coming for."

Madame Marion, who was not fond of dictation, answered rather sharply, "Who doubts it? when did I ever neglect anything?—who imagines there is an Hotel in Paris to compare with

mat we of the bourgeoisie can " Of the bourgeoisie! why you mean," said Nantouillet, an money enough to buy them all they been glad to pawn their their jewels and their family plat they to show that I havn't double " Birth, - birth !" said old Ma storm and fume - you can't ma ease to me than the truth: - die your father at Orleans when he business as an apothecary? - ar been for my care, would he ever h a rich man and left you all this since Madame Marie Touchet, you to Paris, we hear of nothing be princes, - too much of them, I fan

to do with them the better."
"Hold your peace, Marion!" sa

citizens: take my word for it, the

the royal party honour me with their visit. It will be a grand affair. I shall invite Marcel and Charron, merely to show them how I can live. I know they will die with spite, but that I do not care for — it will be such a triumph!" "Here they both come," said Marion, "and you can give your invitation directly then."

As she spoke, the two Prévôts were announced, and Nantouillet, with much satisfaction, welcomed them, and insisted immediately on taking them into his new gallery, which he sured them was more exquisite than any of "It is," said he, " entirely built in the others. wown taste. First, I have had the tapestry represent the walls of the Grand Turk's tent; nound, in the niches, I have placed the puble statues which used to stand in the hall. and some others I have lately bought are, as you perceive, without heads. You will wonder why, but I will tell you—they are antiques, and, I understand, are much more precious when not complete; therefore I have had the heads knocked off in order to produce an uniform effect. I think they never saw this at the Louvre: this the only room I really like in the whole of this fine house, because I built it myself, and bare entirely arranged it according to my fancy."

sad, that the vain dignitary was career of taste, and looked at the curiosity.

"We are not come, Nantoui ron, "to talk on these matters much more grave, — I would agreeable: — but we have a fear delivered to us by the Duke de and we are commanded to impart

He drew a paper from his pock it to Nantouillet, who, casting hi let it drop from his hands in consta the deep hue of his cheeks cha paleness.

"St. Marie! — blessed Marty Geneviève defend us!" exclaimed der all the Huguenots in cold l be required of us? Is there no ing it?"

" None" --- --

dicers and neighbours. Every house harbouring Huguenots must be marked, and measures must be taken to prevent the possibility of their escape."

"But our friends," said Nantouillet: "may we not give information to our friends; may we not warn them of their danger?"

"We must not think of friends or foes," returned Charron; "the orders are peremptory,—our lives will answer for neglecting them. It is a cruel duty, but must be performed. The Huguenots would have done the same by us, but that their plot is discovered."

"The saints be thanked," said Nantouillet,
"there are none in my hotel, though I have
several excellent friends amongst them who
often visit me. Heaven grant they arrive not
at this time! What confusion in a house,—a
handsome one like this, too!"

"Well," said Charron, "we cannot disobey or delay our order. I must have a thousand men ready this night to act when the signal is given: and having communicated this unpleasant news, I must now leave you, hoping that you will not fail to do all you can in this busi-

The last words were spoken in a significant manner, and appeared to convey a double

great dilemma, and divided bet distinguish himself as a chief his desire to show leniency to guenots, to whom he, in con greatest part of the reputable c ill will.

While he was musing in this gently opened, and he was awar sence of a Cordelier whom he had as a messenger from a friend of from whom this monk had brough sage of greeting.

"Enter, good father," said he. you are come, for I have a few que which you can perhaps resolve. it an act likely to give satisfacti and to draw down a blessing on to—to put to death a Huguenot?

The monk started. "My son,"

Phérôt. "Yet a heretic and a traitor, you how, makes it a different thing."

"Are then the Huguenots traitors?" asked the monk. "What are they now accused of?"

"to destroy the King, overturn the state, and massacre all the Catholics in France. Now, you see, this being known, would it not be just and right, and pleasing to Mother Church, that we should punish them for this intent in their own coin?"

"By massacre?" inquired the Cordelier.

Nantouillet nodded assent.

"And is this measure resolved on?" was the inquiry.

"It is, and must be done: this very Sunday with is the time fixed. Not a Huguenot must be left alive in Paris. It is a dreadful business. There may yet be time, good father, if it would not be a sin, to warn a few of one's friends, if thought absolution could be obtained for—"

"Doubtless, doubtless, my son," said the mak in a hurried tone; "they may by this means be brought to the true faith. It would be a crime to neglect it: it will be a sin to execute such a command. Does the King himself know of this?"

"Oh, ask me nothing," said the Prévôt. "I must say nothing — I am all confusion!"

The Cordelier's emotion was violently excited; his hands trembled, and his voice was faltering with suppressed feeling, as he uttered, "This is the work of Catherine. I see her hand in it!"

"Good father," said the kind-hearted Prévôt,
"you abide in the faubourg St. Germain; could
you not contrive just to — I dare not say the
word — I would not, you know, be privy to —
the Vidame de Chartres — the Sieur de Caumont — if they knew their danger —"

"They are at the Admiral's at this moment!" exclaimed the Cordelier, "and must be warned."

The Cordelier approached Nantouillet, and took his hand, which he pressed with fervour. "Fear not, excellent man," he whispered; "there may yet be time. Farewell! and Heaven prosper you. You will see me no more. I have deceived you for some time past: — this robe which covers me conceals a secret which it is not yet time to reveal. I sought your hotel on a feigned errand. One near and dear to me died in yonder chamber, and at great risk I came here, that I might lay me once more where she lay, and behold the spot where

I parted with her, a corpse, for she was murdered by Queen Catherine!"

"In my house!" interrupted Nantouillet.

"Here," said the monk. "I can say no more. I thank you for your pity, and may the blessing of Heaven remain with you!"

In another moment the Cordelier was gone, and the Prévôt stood aghast gazing after him.

"He never named the Saints!" exclaimed he. "He is a Huguenot! A death in my hotel!—how unpleasant. But I will keep it a secret: it would entirely spoil my fête. Alas! this sad business will greatly interfere with my entertainment. I trust it is a storm which will blow over. I do not see my way in the matter. I must consult—Oh! would that I had never been Prévôt of Paris,—the object so long of all my desires!"

The discomfited dignitary threw himself upon a seat, and covered his face with his hands, vinly ruminating, and coming at last to no conclusion. He was only roused by the announcement of his supper; and in the enjoyment of that meal he by degrees lost the intensity of his distress, and began to shape out some plan of conduct which, as a magistrate, it was incumbent on him to pursue.

CELFTER IVE

. veset ur. mi na 1 iniy iny. Saor

CLASSE a prev to uneasy thoughts as ful refersions on the crime of Rismon a treachery of the court party, was alone chamber anxiously expecting tidings of th of the Admiral, when a knock at his do nounced the presence of a young page, wh rerremised as a domestic attendant on Mabille. He delivered to him a billet from nurse, which contained these words: -- " C to me on the instant at the palace; I have important communication to make, and entr you not to delay." He was struck with the hurried style of the note, and was seized with involuntary dread of some impending evil. He lost no time in following the page to the Losvre, and entered the palace by a private door appropriated to the use of the household.

As soon as he reached the apartment of Mabile, she hastily welcomed him, and with a look d caution led him into an inner chamber, where, after carefully fastening the door and examining the arras, she seated herself, and desiring Claude to approach thus addressed him: - "I have just received a warning which has filled me with alarm and uncertainty. This paper was conveyed to me in a sugared sweetmeat, thrown from a gallery of the palace as I passed through one of the halls." She opened a small slip of paper, and read - "'You are safe; but if you have a Huguenot friend, bid him take heed of midnight. Coligni lives, but the next blow will be more sure.' I am," said she, "in great perplenty, not knowing how to act or what to understand: some danger is evidently at hand, but of what nature I am at a loss to conceive. Judge if my fears have justly interpreted. I about to confide to you a secret which, I know, will be safe in your keeping. Alix, the dengater of the President Bailly, is a Protest-Her mother secretly nourished the true hith, and on her death-bed confided to me the charge of leading Alix in the right path. Bailly is a rigid papist, and cautiously and silently have I executed the dying commands of her whom I considered as my own offspring. Many and severe have been her daughter's trials, but her firm mind has hitherto supported them: terror, however, of her father's anger has made her conceal the truth from him; of late, indeed, since the apparent reconciliation between the parties, she has comforted herself with the hope of revealing it with less danger of his indignation. Interest is the prime mover of all the actions of Bailly; and if the Protestants suffer no molestation on account of their religion, but, on the contrary, are supported by the power of the King of Navarre, it will be less difficult to reconcile him to her profession of faith. René Bianco has asked her hand in marriage of her father, and his consent, in spite of the odium which now attaches to him, will not, I fear, be withheld: but Alix has a vow in Heaven against the union, and I know her resolution can never be shaken. What if this warning should point to some danger threatening her? What if René, aware of her aversion, has discovered her religious opinions, and has some diabolical plan in agitation? I believe him capable of any crime. - he, - the assassin of the good Coligni. and the murderer of Jeanne of Navarre!"

"Oh God!" cried Claude, every nerve trembling with emotion, "what can be done to save har! It is but too plain,—he meditates a fearful revenge. Midnight!—the time is not far distant. Has she no suspicion of her danger? Have you not—"

"No," interrupted Mabille, "I would not terrify her with what may, after all, be but an idle jest, — for there are many here who love to trifle with the feelings of an aged and favoured person. It is to you alone that I venture to communicate my fears, and would place you on your guard against a possible evil. At the time mentioned see that the house is well secured, — that no precaution of safety is neglected; and sleep not till the hour of peril be past. Go, then, my dear Claude, —forgive the fears of one who has known so many afflictions that she haply starts at shadows: if we are deceived, the suspicion can perish in oblivion."

"I will hasten back without a moment's delay," cried the impatient Claude. "Oh! Mabille, you know not how dear is the charge you have entrusted me with; my life would be willingly sacrificed to preserve the peace, the happiness of Alix: to protect her is a duty I fly to perform."

Hastily clasping Mabille's hand, he sprang to the door, but his extreme agitation, as he supposed, prevented his opening it. He press-

ed the spring in vain, it yielded not. Ashamed of his awkwardness, he exerted his strength, — still the door resisted. Mabille advanced, half-smiling, in spite of her anxiety, at the consequence of his impetuosity, — half-vexed at the delay, but she found her efforts equally unavailing.

"It is strange!" cried both at once, as they united their endeavours, but to no purpose.

"This way!" said Mabille, turning pale;
"you can pass by the other door." So saying,
she led him through a closet to another chamber; but their consternation was great on finding that door also fastened. Mabille uttered
an exclamation of terror. Claude exhausted
himself in vain attempts, and paced the room in
inexpressible distress.

"What can this mean?" he said—"it cannot be a mere jest; and while I linger, Alix is abandoned. Oh Heavens! is there no means of escaping?—the windows?"

"Alas!" said Mabille, "we are in the highest part of the palace." Claude, however, had rushed towards them, and throwing open one observed with dismay its immense height from the ground.

It looked into the outer court of the palace, and he remarked that the space below was

nearly filled with armed men, - while, as he stretched his view beyond, he saw lights moving in all directions, and a confused murmur of voices was borne to him upon the wind, mingled with the clashing of armour and the movement of horses. He now recalled to mind that on his way to the palace his progress had been impeded by the numerous troops of guards whom he had met. He was aware that in consequence of the late horrible attempt on the life of Coligni, double sentries were placed in every direction, and he was not surprised at the stir which he observed everywhere: the enquiries of the page had been answered by the announcement that preparations were making for a nocturnal fête at the Louvre.

Both he and Mabille gazed hopelessly from their elevated situation, each moment increasing their distress of mind as they vainly speculated on an occurrence of so singular and untoward a nature, if indeed it was not the effect, as they dreaded, of design. They wearied each other in conjecture, and in this manner several hours passed away. As midnight approached, the fears of Claude for Alix rose almost to distraction, and Mabille wept and prayed alternately in all the agonies of anxiety.

The hour of midnight tolled, and with a

shudder they counted each stroke of th Suddenly they perceived that all the wi in the palace, as far as they could see illuminated: the murmur of voices as clanking of steps became more audible. o'clock sounded, and the clamour below & rather to increase. At length the great the opposite church of St. Germain de l'A rois struck two, and its deep, hollow tor tinctly heard by the prisoners, was intern with the loud beating of the palace cloc few moments elapsed, when the clamou the court grew louder and louder. bent from the window at which he was s ed: the clear moonlight shone with da brilliancy as if in mockery of the lights appeared in all directions; but the heav conies, and their projecting ornaments cealed much from his view. Occasiona caught glimpses of moving figures, some ing torches, others drawn swords and bar Suddenly a yell, loud, terrible, and conti resounded through the air, followed by mendous discharge of musketry, amidst t of which were discernible shouts of exul appalling shrieks, agonised cries. Within out, the tumult raged; the air seemed p with yelling demons, and sounds so he that human nature shuddered to hear them, mag through the brain of Claude and his afrighted companion, as they stood alone, speechless with horror, gazing on each other with starting eyes, doubting whether fear had not deprived them of reason, and that the howling sounds around were not the creation of their disordered imagination.

Louder, more frequent, and more appalling, grew the shouts and cries, mixed with the stunning report of cannon. "The Guises! the Guises!" shrieked Mabille;—"the King! the King! my poor child! they have besieged the palace and will murder him, while I am kept from him by bolts and bars!"

Overcome by the fearful vision her imagination had conjured up, she fell senseless on the floor; while Claude, utterly unable to assist her, stood aghast and immovable with horror. The dreadful truth flashed upon his mind,—a cry reached him, — and the hideous nature of the tumult was revealed; — words of frightful meaning echoed in his hearing, "Kill! kill!—leave none alive!—down with the Huguenots!—strike!—the King commands—strike, in the name of the blessed Virgin, and exterminate the hereics!"

The massacre of St. Bartholomew had begun.

CHAPTER N

THE CONSENT.

I should have thought of heaven as The morning star mix'd with infer Ere I had thought of this.

In the house of the Preside tranquillity. Alix, however, he rest: her mind was occupied thoughts which chased each oth cession. Now she reflected on her position, on the insecurity on the perils which beset those then her imagination brought be view the marriage pageant and accompaniments; and she show

appeared but little to enter into her feelings of indignant horror of his act.

One thought, in spite of all her efforts, she was unable to banish: it returned again and again, and would intrude in spite of her struggles to suppress it—the image of Claude Emars—her deliverer—her friend. His devoted and tender manner,—the pensive and expressive expression of his countenance,—his looks of admiration and of pity which she had observed bent on her face,—all were present to her mental view, and all convinced her, not only that she was dear to him, but that the unfortunate passion which he felt was shared in an equal degree by herself.

The night wore on, and in the silence of her chamber she wept for some time, abandoning herself to melancholy fancies: at length, reproaching herself for thus permitting sorrow to usure the place of that resignation which the pure faith she had adopted ought to inspire, she knelt and offered to Heaven the homage of an afflicted and innocent heart, and having concluded her prayer, she sang the hymn which follows, to an air composed by the Protestant Goudinel, by whom most of the new translations of the Psalms were set.

I tuned my infinit lips to I turned to Heaven, and

For we to many are becomed A by-word and a sound But still we seek our bright And hail the wrongs we Oh, go not from us, Lord, Protect us in our evil day!

The time is dark — we fain
Our foes are mightier far
They say, "Their God forge
And who shall their deliv'
But rouse thee, Father!—pre
And save us at the latest ho

As she rose from her knees two, and a few minutes after sl knocking at the outer gate. S alarm and ran to the window; to out grew louder and more viole by the moonlight a figure glithe court, and unber the '

hostile intentions was soon dissipated when Alix heard their vociferous exclamations, which appeared but the echo of a howling mob without.

"Down with the Huguenots!" roared a dozen voices; "deliver up the Huguenots! Kill! kill!—it is the King commands!"

"Merciful Heaven!" she exclaimed, "they will murder the unfortunate Claude!"

Her first movement was to rush to her father's apartment, where, having gained admittance, she threw herself into his arms, speechless with terror. Alarm and consternation took possession of the mind of Bailly as he heard the loud yells and the approaching footsteps of the ruffian band which had entered his house.

"My child — my Alix!" cried he, "what is this? Are the plots of the Huguenots ripe, and are we to become their victims?"

"Oh, father! father!" cried Alix, "why will you wrong these unfortunate men? — would we were in their hands! But hark! listen to their cries — they approach — they are here! — oh, mercy! mercy!"

A sudden crash was now heard, and the door of the apartment was burst open, giving admittance to a crowd of ferocious-looking men,

doting old man below and his daughter. Away = -to your business!"

With tumultuous zeal his comrades hurried into the street, leaving René on his way back to the President's room. Infuriated with disappointment, he no longer attempted disguise, but rushed into the presence of Bailly and his daughter, clamouring vehemently that they should discover to him the retreat of Claude.

"Bianco," said the President, "I was ignorant of his absence, and have no power to direct you to him."

"It is false! — it must be false!" cried René; "but you seek to protect him in vain. I have sworn to make him my victim, and he shall be so!" Then turning to Alix, whose terror scarcely allowed her to breathe, he continued,—"Alix, do you love your father or this low-bred menial best? I know his thoughts are raised to you, nor have your mutual glances been lost on me; but this moment must decide your fate. The mob is at your gates. Hark! they are massacring on every side!—they pause not to inquire who are their friends; and when they rush into your house, tell me who will save your father from their fury? I can do so, and I alone."

"Oh, save him - save him! and let me perish only!" shrieked Alix. As he spoke he darted forward, and all the band, with imprecations and yells, hurried after him.

The room usually occupied by Claude was soon reached, and the door dashed to pieces without delay: with the cry of wolves they sprang towards his bed, and their leader, who was no other than Bianco, brandishing his dagger, cried in a voice hoarse with fury, "Hurra! he escapes me not a second time!" As he spoke he aimed a deadly blow, but what was his amazement to discover that the place was unoccupied, and he had expended his rage in vain. A coarse laugh from his companions added to his passion and confusion.

"Ha! ha! Master René!" cried the facetions dwarf Ancelin, perching himself on the bed's foot, "this is too good a joke; this Huguenot must be one of the devil's kindred, for he takes good care of him. Did none of you see him vanish in a flame of fire as we came in? Who would have thought that the Huguenotaille could foil a Florentine!"

"This is dull work," said Flé, searching the room in vain, while the others clamoured to be gone.

"Hence, then!" cried René; "you will find occupation enough. Leave me to deal with the

President the delivery of his Prote Bailly attempted to speak.

"Your lives are in our hand he. "This is no time for wor the accursed Huguenot — the b Vache de Navarre? Speak, or in the house!"

"What is your purpose?"
President faintly.

"Extermination to the Hugu twenty voices.

Flé advanced to Alix, and I hand on her delicate arm to drag father, when his action was ar sudden entrance of a man masked in a cloak, on which was a larg similar to those worn by the other "Hold, Captain!" he cried, in

vibrated to the heart of Alix; "t chamber: he sleeps not here -

"Both shall be safe, but on one condition," he suswered. "Your father's word is given; it remained but for you to ratify it. When the marderers return, as they will do,—already I hear them,—their swords and pikes are gleaming in the light of the burning houses, — their shouts are nearer;—do you not hear them?"

"Oh, yes — yes!" cried the terrified girl:
"is there no way to save my father? Speak!
what can I do to prevent his being butchered in
my sight?"

"Acknowledge yourself my wife!" cried René, seizing her wrist and dragging her to the windows, where a frightful spectacle presented itself of flying wretches pursued and hewn down, blood flowing, houses pillaged and on fire, and a hideous noise of voices, loud in fury, shrieks, groans, and bursts of artillery echoing along the air,—

"Say that you are mine," he repeated,—
"as mine you must be,—and even yet it is not
too late!"

"Never! — never!" shrieked Alix, breaking from him and rushing to her father. "I cannot, father! it is impossible!"

"Then, President, your fate is sealed. I can protect you no longer: your blood be on your daughter's head!"

way!" roared one amongst the other moment the room was fi orderly band of wretches, their with the excitement of recent chands and clothes crimson with their words fraught with vengear

A blow from the foremost for dent to the ground; while René and motionless, gazing on the tures of his child. Pikes and s vanced—a rush was made—a Bailly was not worth a mom when Alix, desperate with terrecried, in a loud and piercing to father!—I am the wife of René shout from René followed her excheard no more,—she saw no mor murmur of horrid sounds rung a mass of scowling, grinning facher eyes,—she fell prostrate on

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FUGITIVE.

With what grief was my heart then darken'd! And how did everything I then saw look like death!

St. AUGUSTIN.

In a deep embrasure of one of the windows in a chamber of the Queen-mother's apartments at the Louvre sat a party of ladies, looking out upon the moonlight river which glittered at the foot of the tower. These were the young Queen of Navarre and her friends, whose beauty had obtained them the title of the three Graces. Henriette, Duchess de Nevers, Catherine, Princess de Portien, and their younger sister Marie, the bride of Condé. A deep sadness, very unusual with them, overspread the society, occasional monosyllables and suppressed sighs alone interrupting the silence. The suspicion under which the Duke de Guise had fallen of having attempted the life of the Admiral, weighed heavily on the heart of the no cure, and the thoughts of M undefinable and full of the deepe Suddenly the plash of oars was small boat was observed approace of the tower which projected continuous the body of the building towards neared the land, and a young cat and covered with a large cloak, leat and looking up towards the wine many fair forms were placed, he guitar, and after a short prelud harmony and beauty, sang the follows.

Thou art to me less than a shade
By fragile leaves of autumn made
Less than the note of some lone bi
'Midst early spring's first whispers
A weed—a feather on the sea—
All this, and less, thou art to me!

Why does my trembling fancy dw On all that paints thy form too we Why see, where'er Lturn things I know all hope thy smile to gain
Is idle weakness, fond and vain,
As vain to look for clouds past by,—
As vain to follow vacancy,—
Tell me what else is vainer yet
That this weak heart will not forget!

"Ah!" whispered the Duchess de Nevers, "it is doubtless 'Le beau D'Entragues.' How imprudent to come here! Dear Madame Marguerite, your beauty has crazed him, or rather the misfortune of your marriage has made him forget all but his wretchedness. I feared some fatal consequence; for when he quitted the cathedral he was heard to exclaim, 'I have only now to die of regret!'"

"Let us retire from the window," returned the Princess in the same tone, "poor D'Entragues,—I thought his passion only gallantry,—and indeed, I trust it is no more: he merely follows the fashion of our day, when, like the troubadours of old, it is necessary to an accomplished knight to have a fatal attachment. To love without return is indeed a misfortune!"

"Alas!" said the Princess de Condé, "to love and be separated for ever is despair; how much I pity him!"

"At this moment, the Queen-mother, the Duchess de Lorraine, the King and his brothers entered the room, and much to the sur-

"How is this?" said Cathe voice; "why are you still her it is fitting that you retire to yo we have business of importance t about which you have no concern not require your services furthe you all to withdraw."

All those to whom she spok made their obeisance and left the the young Queen of Navarre lin her sister of Lorraine had taken grasping it with a convulsive mo ed her.

Her mother looked angrily to "Did you hear me, madam," s "or must I repeat my commands

"My dear mother," said the Deraine in a low voice, "hear me. Or you are doing. Is it well to expose rite to so much danger? why not

Marguerite had caught the last words, and tuning deadly pale, "What is the matter?" aid she, "what danger threatens my husband?"

"Silence!" returned Catherine, "I insist mon her going instantly."

Claude de Lorraine burst into a passion of tears, and throwing herself into her sister's arms, exied out, "O God! Marguerite, my dear sister, do not go."

Catherine's brow became livid with rage; "Am I to be braved by children?" she exclaimed. "Come hither, Claude; leave your sister instantly, and attend to what I order."

So saying, she seized the arm of Claude and drewher into a distant part of the room; the young Queen could not overhear their words; but she saw that the one pleaded earnestly, while the other kept an unmoved and stern countenance.

"It is enough — no harm will reach her,"
"It all she heard, while the Duchess once more
"Proaching, kissed her tenderly, and overcome
with emotion left the room. Marguerite did
the same, leaving her mother with the party
who had entered, and who were all in deep discourse, apparently unconscious of the scene
which had been going on.

She was received without served a gloom on the faces subject of their conversation sed, for they were speaking of the Admiral's life, and veh that justice should be done by the murderer, whom they hesi as the Duke de Guise.

or thirty or lorty.

"He has quitted Paris," sail varre; "cowardly assassin as he consequences of his crime: but will yet overtake him. I have but now, and he has solemnly produdience to-morrow morning, bet any other business. I believe he and doubt not that he will pursous Guises to the utmost."

Marguerite started; she had the Queen's chamber but a m he was represented with the paleness of her countenance, and persuded her to lie down, which she consented to, but her anxiety prevented her sleeping, for she still heard her husband and his friends in serices and angry discussion. At length, Henry of Navarre entered her chamber, and perceiving her in tears spoke in a kind and gentle tone, and begged her to be comforted, — that all would be well.

"I am going," said he, " to the jeu de paume, with some of my friends, — to sleep is impossible to night; — we shall be ready to wait on the King early in the morning, and I would not have it seem that we are all watching; play will be a sufficient excuse if he should ask for me; let it be known how I am engaged. Adieu, dear Marguerite."

"She started, and a feeling of astonishment, pleasure, and joy, even to agony, took possession of her senses; she had no words to reply, and he was gone instantly. She rose on her couch and put her hand to her heart, to repress its violent beating — this was the first word of endemment Henry had ever used to her—this was almost the first look of kindness he had given her. Cold, unmoved, and silent, he had appeared to endure her presence, but no more; — she had been nothing to him, but apparently an ob-

strument of tyranny which C in his path, as he conceived,

He knew little of her he generosity, her noble frankned dulgence; her love! yes,—s conceal it from herself; she he who neglected her; she adored her affection; she, the object of so many — for whom d'I was breaking, whom the gallan to honour; from whom the petook their inspiration — she, Venus Uranie, — she, who saw tentates at her feet, — loved for and in vain!

Several hours passed away and ed on; at length, exhausted we degrees sleep stole over her, and on her pillow, her arm suppor By the side of her couch her me, oh my God! out of the hand of the ungedly, out of the hand of the unrighteous and creel man."

The clock of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois tolled two. A fearful dream disturbed the sleep of the Princess: hideous forms, — flames, — seas of blood, appeared before her eyes. She strove to fly, — to shriek: iron chains seemed to bind her to the spot, — terrible sounds were in her ears as of a violent tumult. She started and woke, but the vision was still there! The sound still echoed round her; and a furious brocking at the door of her chamber roused her nurse, who, with terrified looks, listened while they were repeated with frantic vehemence, accompanied by cries of "Navarre!"

"Fly to undo the door!" cried Marguerite:
"it is my husband!— some evil has befallen

The nurse obeyed, and with trembling hands removed the bolt, when a frightful spectacle presented itself to them—a young man covered with blood, which issued from several wounds, darted wildly into the room, and threw himself at the feet of the young Queen. "I am content," he exclaimed, "since I may die here!"

fierce, their eyes rolling, at of fury. "Down with the kill!" were the words she the wretched man in her an with her body.

"Hold, ruffians!" she exc dare you to murder a subje of your King's sister!"

"He is a heretic!—give is the King commands," roa assassin, advancing to seize hi

Marguerite, with a movement which overcame her terror, the the kneeling man, who still ground the waist: but another have decided his fate, when a without was heard calling the forbear: and Nançay, the Caprushed forward and there has been been supported by the contract of the contract

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like sheep to be slaughtered: leave this mis-

"He waved his hand, and the troop hurried away with vociferous exclamations of fury; while, turning to Marguerite, he cried, "Madam, it may not be; all of this accursed race are doomed! Give up the prisoner, he is condemned to die."

"No, Nançay!" shrieked the Queen:—" disgrace not the name of a brave soldier by such an act. He is under my protection, and none ever sued for it in vain. What means this violence, — these fearful cries, — this horrid outrage? Against whom do you war, and who are to be your victims?"

"The Huguenots!" returned he. "This night every Huguenot in Paris,— nay, throughout France, must die! it is decreed. Hark! the cannon— the shouts!—I must to my post. He whom you would preserve, I see, is already dead." As he spoke he dragged the object of his search from the clasp of his protectress:— he had fainted, and gave no sign of life. "Do what you will with him, I ask no questions."

"He was rushing away when Marguerite cried after him, — "For the love of the blessed saints, tell me where is my Henry!"

"Safe," returned the Captain,- " unhurt, in

entered your breast, ab moment!—if you have prayers!" and she clung long black hair flowing i feet, her white arms cla

dress disordered and stain

face pale as ashes.

The rough soldier gave prostrate figure; a shudde frame. "Rise, madam," is no posture for you. For while I have an arm to u defenceless. I will conduct chamber; there use your

must follow commands so c Marguerite looked back was supporting the wounder

the devoted princes. Oh,

to tend him if he still lived

some and entreaties for pity,—all these sounds came in confused clamours to her ear, as half-dragged along she hurried towards her brother's apartments. The doors of the ante-chamber were open, and from thence rushed a man pursued by soldiers, who, at a few paces from her, pierced his body with their halberds, and he fell, shrieking for mercy, to the ground. The arms of Nançay received her as she sank fainting, but, recovering her strength, she darted forward, and was clasped to her sister's breast.

"Oh! Claude, Claude!" she exclaimed,
"where is my husband?" But before an anwer could be returned, renewed cries were
heard, and De Moissens and D'Armagnac, two
of Henry of Navarre's attendants, came flying
along the corridor, and took refuge in the room.

"Save us, Princess, save us!" they shrieked; "we are pursued, and have no hope but in
yea."

In another moment the door was closed and locked by Nançay, and the unfortunate men were kept from those who sought their lives, while Marguerite and her sister flew with the speed of terror through the line of chambers, and, reaching the King's bedchamber, fell almost senseless at the threshold.

was partly open, his lips distended; his hair seem and streamed wildly in a was clenched amongst its he held an arquebuse. stood beside him, pale als and sullen; her large b him, seemed riveted to appeared to hold him as leant upon his shoulder, a him as though an iron frame: the other hand was ger pointed, as if direct scenes which were beyond of horrible meaning flitted fresh peal burst on the st like chamber, and shrill tapestried walls. Henry Prince of Condé were be

himself on the ground,

ter pardon for this horrible crime, save these ton massacre and death!"—she pointed to the princes, for her tongue refused to pronounce their names.

"Away, Marguerite, away!" cried Charles wildly. "It is too late — all must fall — there is no safety but in their destruction. Why do you come with that ghastly look to reproach and torture me? The will of Heaven must be performed!"

"Then you will save them - you will save your own soul? Brother, dear brother, have I not loved you, cherished you? - were we not infants together - have not our joys and sortows been the same? Have I ever wronged you in thought? and how has Henry done so? -has he not confided in you, trusted you with all his people — given himself and them into your hands, and do you repay him with treachey and murder? Turn not from me - you must bear me: never, never will I quit you till you grant me their lives, or, if you refuse it, here on this spot I will remain to be the first victim: and know, Charles, the blood you thus shed of your nearest and dearest will rise against you, and make your future life a scene of perpetual horror. Phantoms will flit around your bed - spirits of vengeance will shriek in your starting up and bursting therine; "distract me riciations. Navarre, Condbers — avoid my sight, lessafe. Nançay, take heed harmed; set guards upon lives be sacred as my of hurriedly continued, "the by my own hand! Fear counsel shall be followed. sure; the enemies of Gome!"

So saying, he grasped the struction which he held, rewindow, and fired, crying ou of a maniac, as he reloade kill! down with the enemies

CHAPTER XIX.

LES MATINES DE PARIS.

There lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood!
Shakspeare.

THE Cordelier, on quitting Nantouillet, hurried along the quay, and, taking a boat, passed the river. The boatman, he observed, made a sign to him as they parted, which he did not understand, and he felt somewhat uneasy in perceiving that he looked after him with a glance of very sinister expression as he stepped out of the boat, and he saw him whispering to some of his comrades, but heard not their words.

The Rue de Bethizy, where the Admiral resided, was not so soon gained as he had hoped, for he found the streets crowded with soldiers, and met groups of men of the lowest classes, who seemed parading up and down in riotous confusion, unrepressed by any authority. He

contrived to push through the crowd, and had nearly arrived at the door he sought, when some men with torches rushed along, and he was obliged to stand up and let them pass; but as he did so, the light, flashing upon his face, discovered him distinctly to those who were advancing.

"Ha! the Huguenot Cordelier, by Notre Dame!" cried a voice close to him: and looking up, he saw his assailant on a late occasion, Crucé, the butcher of the faubourg St. Jacques. He was accompanied by men in a variety of costume, evidently foreign; but their leader's countenance he required but one glance to recognize as that of Captain Florio: the recollection of the Italian appeared to be quite as quick, to judge by the exclamation of surprise which he made. Crucé bounded forward, and would have seized the monk, had not the latter at the same instant caught a torch from the hand of the foremost, which he thrust full in the face of the butcher. A loud laugh from some, and exclamations from several of the party, echoed along the street, and attracted the notice of a group of students who were passing. Always ready for a fray, they hurried to the scene of action, and found their old acquaintance the Cordelier struggling with the infuriate Crucé, who, enraged at the laughter of his companions, and half blinded by the fame, was rendered perfectly furious. The monk, however, was a man nearly as tall, and apparently as powerful as his enemy, and dealt blows in all directions, as he stood with his back against a door, and kept his assailants at bay.

"Give way!" cried the student Belcastel, rushing forward, followed by his friends. "Come on, comrades; we owe this monk some reparation, and though he is a Cordelier, we will not see him overpowered by numbers. St. Germain! St. Germain! to the rescue!"

So saying, they commenced a vigorous assault on the torchbearers, and cries and blows resounded on all sides. Florio meantime had approached the monk, and as his arm was raised to keep off one of the mob, slid close to him, and suddenly drawing a dagger from his vest stabbed him in the shoulder. The steel must have entered his side, but that Beltastel's hand interposing, prevented the stroke taking effect.

"Fly! you are wounded," cried Belcastel; "leave us to deal with these ruffians: we are many, and you will only lose your life if you stay."

As he spoke, a patrol of several soldier arrived at the spot, and one amongst them. by his dress, appeared to belong to the (called out in an authoritative tone.-

" Fools! disperse instantly, - have vot gotten my orders? - the hour has not st you will spoil all. Young gentlemen," h ded, turning to the students, " what I this licence? why do you attack peaceful zens in the streets? will you always be ing disturbances by your turbulence? Sol make them your prisoners!"-

"We will see that!" exclaimed Belc " fly, my friends, we can show them it is I easy to catch as to command."

The crowd which had gathered round d this tumult gave way instantly, to afford ; sage for their favourites, who, though pre create disturbances, were, nevertheless, rous, and their spirit and courage made generally liked. Several of the people out as they barred the passage of the sol " Down with the Italians; - what do we with Italians? - who made the Queen's p er a general? - Is it René Bianco who ged the Queen of Navarre? - Long live Charles - Confusion to Catherine!" and a similar shouts and derisive epithets, René

his way to the palace, while the active s contrived to elude their pursuers, and rdelier, taking advantage of the conhastened on, and soon found himself he gate of the Admiral's abode.

e he found himself in the midst of con-Several men, who were once more. g suits of armour and swords into the he house, were arrested by Cosseins, the of the guard, placed there by the King, posed protection against any attempt from He insisted that no one should ises. nd that his orders were strict to prevent it. ieur de Guerchy, who accompanied the -bearers, passionately contended for ad-, and some of his people proceeded to enr to force their entrance; the Cordelier them, sought an opportunity of slipping merved: but his habit appeared to give to those who knew him not as a friend, and repulsed by them. At this time Teligni orth from the house, and in his usual gencalm manner requested that all parties refrain from violence, for that the Admio was much recovered, was sleeping, and se might do him injury.

his soft and persuasive voice the tumult, for Teligni was so much adored by

close by—should the me instantly be informed bonne, the first valet of attended him to the dot an attempt to approach thrust back by those who spairing of his purpose, it self to Labonne, who, recombefore visited his master, allow him to enter, who dimagining that he admitted who, he thought, might be of the mansion.

At length, then, the C within the walls; but the admit him to Coligni, who Vidame de Chartres still h "He left but half an reply.
"My friends," said the

the friend of the Admiral; let him be placed in a litter, and conveyed away to any obscure part of the town — let him cross the river, and before the gates are closed he may yet escape."

"Madness!" exclaimed Paré the surgeon, who was near; "he is unable to bear it; and why should you doubt the King's protection? His guards and those of Navarre surround us. I am sent here by his Grace expressly to attend to the patient. There is no danger. We are aware of the intentions of De Guise, and are prepared to meet any attack."

"Oh, my good father!" said the sieur de Bouchavannes, "we are in no fear; so long as there are no traitors in the house, the Admiral is safe."

He said this with a suspicious glance at the Cordelier, which was not long in being understood by those round. Several daggers were drawn from the girdles of the bystanders, and imprecations uttered against any who would seek to betray their master.

"O God!" said the monk, "will nothing persuade you — and will you remain to be a sacrifice? — Hear me, infatuated men! I came through dangers and difficulties innumerable, to warn you while there might be yet time. A plot is on foot to massacre all the Huguenots in

"And why do you, a us? what cause has a C of the Protestants?" ask "I am not what I s throwing back his cowl forfeit of the discovery; means of convincing you servant of the Admiral.

means of convincing you servant of the Admiral, me. Alas! was it not the fatal spear on that has caused all my misfi France?"

Jolet, the confidential bonne, on Coligni, pressed these words, and with a lo at the feet of the monk exc "De Montgomery! is it lord,—my dear lord! do I! A general astonishment all. Montgomery, anxious

the Huguenot chiefs who resided in that conter.

He accordingly descended the stairs, propaing to make his way to the river as speedily a possible, but was stopped as he attempted to cross the court by the Swiss guard, who prodained to him that their orders were to allow so one either to go out or in during the remainder of the night; that it was now nearly midnight, and at daybreak every one would be at liberty.

"There is nothing for us but patience," said M. de Bouchavannes: "meanwhile, we may as well go to rest. There can be no danger with such vigilant guards as surround us."

At this moment the bell of the invalid rang, and his attendants hastened to him. Montgomery, though unwilling to agitate him, thought it better that he should be prepared in case of any tumult, and desired to be anatomized. He found him in bed, but considerably better, although unable to use his arm. He communicated to him what he had heard from the Prévôt; but the Admiral refused to give credit to the idea of the King's being privy to the plot, as indeed Montgomery himself was the from believing. He, however, rose, and covering himself with a nightgown, summoned

Admiral returned thanks to preservation, and offered a good of France, and the cause religion, supplicating that the belief might be led into the treating pardon for all his end the had just finished his of when a knocking was heard ordered Labonne to inquire soon returned, explaining the senger from the King, who demission to the Admiral.

"Lose no time, Labonne," take the keys and give his

"take the keys and give him ac Labonne descended, and ha key in the lock, turned it wit there seemed a pressure on "Stand away," said he; "I ca door if you press against it thus." he, who seemed to have the direction of the party, exclaimed,—

"I will guide you!—this way — this way to the apartments of the Admiral!"

On hearing the confusion without, the Swiss guards of the King of Navarre, who were posted within, as they were to be included in the intended massacre, closed the iron gate which led to the inner court; but Captain Cossein, bringing up his men, ordered them to fire through, which they did instantly, and two out of the five were killed. Cornaton, who, though deputed by the King, was not aware of the meditated treachery, commanded his people to pile coffers and chests, and all the heavy furniture they could find against the inner door.

While they were thus engaged, Cossein, who had succeeded in forcing the iron gate, and had killed the rest of the guard, clamoured for admittance, proclaiming that he acted by the King's command; but Cornaton answered,—

"I was set here as a guard, not as an assassin," and refused to obey.

A furious attack was now made by those outside, and the barricade proved too weak to resist. With a terrific crash the door gave way, and the troop rushed into the body of the house.

the servants flying in al turned to his master, exmons us to himself!"

Montgomery was unarm friend in agony, and saw n —the same calm look of r benevolent smile.

"It is all over with me," friend, and save a life pre Endeavour to warn our ch neglect your warning as I clate. This deed has been The murderers are at hand.

"No," cried Montgomery fend you; this garb may be Are there no arms — nothing

As he spoke, he seized a s was the only defensive weapon and which was merely a slight this he concealed beneath his nection. "Fly, Merlin!" I insist: "Montgomery, fly!" cried the Admiral.

Panie-stricken, and feeling that their lives must be sacrificed if they remained, all fled from the chamber by a concealed door which led to a tower, and to the upper part of the house, and Montgomery remained with the devoted Coligni alone.

The murderers by this time had reached the door of the Admiral's sleeping apartment, where their thundering strokes were heard mingled with commands that it should be opened.

The stillness of death was within: there sat the wounded chief of a hundred battles, weak and faint, and unable to lift the arm which had so many times wielded a sword terrible to his enemies: beside him the gallant Montgomery, once the most accomplished cavalier of his time, the hero of his party, the beloved of the fair, — with no weapon but a sword, which was only made to figure by the side of a carpet knight, having no means besides of defence, with the certainty of beholding his friend's death, and anticipating his own. He had in the hurry of the instant barricaded the door with every article of weight he could find in the room, — had dragged the table and a large

green, and black uniform jou's Swiss guards gleame

There were a few step chamber, and by main for trived to hurl down the for who was no other than Bi companions, and was for The others rushed on, he named Besme, who in his for the Admiral. Attin, Duke d'Aumale, pressed in sword, and made a rush at the

"Hold, miscreants!" c. "respect his grey hairs. Carmed!"

Attin drew back with a shi on the Cordelier. "Tis St. he exclaimed.

"Fool!" roared Besme; Huguenot! What is the

"You ought to respect my age and infirmity; is it is but shortening my life a little more — that is all!"

Conseins at this juncture darted into the mon. "The Duke de Guise is impatient below," cried he. "Is not the deed done yet?"

It was enough. Besme gave one spring and buried his steel in the Admiral's body.

"Thank God, he is not a Frenchman!" cried Montgomery.

With a violent effort he threw off Attin, and s he did so the grasp of René held him hard. With the handle of his broken sword he struck # him, and as he was exclaiming, "Kill the deguised Huguenot! - Kill the traitor Montgenery!" once more felled him to the ground. and leaping over his prostrate body, darted through the tapestried door up the tower steps, and found himself in a long corridor at the top of the house. Onward he flew, following the by the other fugitives had taken, and reaching a mall window, contrived to force himself through it. As he did so a heavy beam fell close to the spot he had quitted, and nearly blocked up the passage behind him. Feeling that by this accident his pursuers would find some difficulty in following him, he continued his perilous way, for he was now on the roof

shouts below, around, to fly he knew not appeared equally frau remain where he was,

A shot sent after h near which he leant; as made a leap onwards. served where he was and when he lighted or round with horror: bety on which he last stood deep, dark, and jagge fronts of houses and roof of two narrow streets. had leapt, and found h the slippery roof of a h that he had just quitted a manner. He scramb faint, and staggered on him that his pursuer

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

were his movements that they failed to reach him.

Before him was a high pile of buildings; if he could gain that he would be lost to view. He advanced crawling on his hands and knees: he felt that he was covered with blood from the wound in his shoulder, and the blows he had received from Attin. Blinded and exhausted, he made one desperate struggle, one spring, and fell senseless down a yawning gulf which seemed open to receive him.

CHAPTE

BROTHERLY

Oh that it were to do !-

CLAUDE, and his comparamained for several hours solitude tortured with agoni ing around them the din of of bells, the shrieks and grand the vociferations of their sought by every means to lochilled his heart with horror see some succour arrive to Huguenots. He stood chair the casement

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

without; while the thick drapery within, nearly two down in his agonised attempts to force the down close to him, shut him almost from the sight of those within the room. He had cause to congratulate himself on the latter circumstance; for he presently heard a key turn in the lock of the antechamber, and he had only time to shrink still more closely to the wall, when a figure advanced into the room where he was, covered with a long, dark cloak, which cautiously approached the spot where Mabille lay, still nearly in a state of insensibility.

This was a man of tall stature, somewhat bent, but not by age; for Claude perceived when he stooped and dropped the mantle from in thoulders that he was not more than two or the and twenty. His head was considerably indired on one side; and this well-known peculiarity, joined to a certain dignity in his induced Claude to imagine that he had seen before; and the full view he caught of his features, discovering an aquiline nose, pallid cheeks, and eves whose remarkably fierce ex-Persion was rather softened at the instant, and which were of a clear hazel, inclining to yellow, whether from constitution or temporary agitation of mind, convinced Claude that it was Charles IX, who stood before him.

his glance. She star in her arms, exclaimed " My child !-my s to me - to France? of last night? - what n which yet ring in my escaped the traitorous will you be warned as mies?-when will you of, their wicked designs Charles returned he affection, but smiled as are deceived, Mabille, Guises are my good fri night done me good se traitor Coligni - lies pie wounds beneath my chan foes will be exterminated guenots are slaughtered

streets of Paris; but I we

mid the nurse, shuddering. "Can my ears have heard aright, that murderers, licensed by an inhuman king, have dared to lay hands on his innocent subjects?"

"The devoted people," answered Charles, sternly, "are swept from my land, too long polluted by their impiety, and treason is at an end. I trust in God none have escaped. It is cruel to show elemency towards them, — it is demency to be cruel."

A cold tremour crept over Claude as he listened. He held his breath, and stood without allowing himself the slightest motion, as he rightly judged that Mabille was the only object of the King's mercy, and his discovery and death would probably have taken place at the same time.

The nurse looked on Charles with a fixed and severe countenance.

"Why, then, did you save me, barbarous Prince?" said she: "what is my worthless life, when the servants of God are slaughtered by the unrighteous? A curse will fall on the beeds of all concerned in this deed: they shall perish from the land, and their inheritance shall pass away. 'Whoso slayeth by the sword shall perish by the sword!' they shall be tormented in this life with remorse, and every

rupted Charles, tremble fice for the nation's g punished for rebellion as "They are murdered

looking undauntedly at derers are accursed!"

"Nurse," said Charle he spoke. "Reproach i it! My mind is confuse can little endure harshnes whom, against my consc

whom, against my consc Irritate me not, lest I forg induced me to preserve stantly and be silent! N but beware of urging me

Mabille followed the where, having thrown hi desired her to remain in a "I am," said he, agitation of last night ha

looks. Nay, do not attempt to refuse; you are as pale as fear, and I must have merry faces round me—now!"

As he pronounced the last word, his voice faltered, and he turned away, making a signal for Mabille to approach a table on which was placed refreshments.

She obeyed, and though almost choked with tears, endeavoured to swallow some necessary nourishment, thinking meanwhile on the situation of Claude, and on the means of relieving him, which appeared difficult, considering the commands she had received from the King to stay where she was.

Charles remained for some time silent and lost in thought; nor was he roused from his reverie till a page entered announcing the approach of the Queen-mother. The King started from his seat.

"How!" cried he, "said I not that I would be alone?"

"Her Grace commanded me to announce her entrance," faltered the page. Charles impatiently motioned him to withdraw, and taking Mabille's hand, led her to an adjoining chamber.

"Stay here," said he, "till my mother has departed. So saying, he left her, and she be-

The section Γ is Γ

and in having perform

Charles muttered a audible; his artful mathe vacillating state of to add:

"You, my son, deser Catholics, for the part glorious sacrifice; they unerring as you marked flying wretches who we hands. It was truly a s the ungodly scattered like the whirlwind of Heaven'

"It was! it was!" at a livid hue overspreading his clenched hands, "a zeal in its cause. I fin though my carbine

leader than the cannon - their starting eyes, s they looked up vainly for mercy, were brighter than the torches' flame, - hundreds and hundreds I saw fall, for they were brought to my gates to be offered up - here! here - even in my very chambers they were pierced by the daggers of the righteous. It was a great, an Yet," he continued wildly, immortal deed! meing the room, and casting his arms above his head, "where is my reward, mother? what prize has Heaven in store for me? when will come my hour of content, of happiness? I have had my desire upon my enemies; I have done — you say I have done well; but I tell you, mother, there is distraction in my brain; remorse - remorse, and worse than death in my soul!"

The wretched Prince cast himself upon a seat, and covered his face with his hands; Catherine's pale brow grew dark as she said:

"Our act is holy: has not Heaven manifested in approval by signs and wonders? A dead and withered thorn in which there was no sap left, and which had been condemned to be rooted up in the cemetery of the Innocents, this morning has sent out blossoms which perfume the whole air, and continue to spring forth in the very sight of men, amazing all beholders."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Charles, listening

"Ha: he!" man it must be a curious Novam and Coude to will delighe in it! Oh should have justice; he Catherine processed King was for from real should relapse into regri " You, Heaven has de pray; the work still go more will fall. Men sh accomplished, and trembl We are chosen as ministe to repine and repent, wh that all is accomplished! son, and let no idle, hum: your zeal for Hosen's

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sneeringly, "that your long-desired project for my brother Anjou has succeeded. My despatches of this day inform me that the Poles have elected him for their King, and are impatient to hail the arrival, in their delightful country, of their new sovereign. You hear the tidings with joy as I expected," he continued, smiling bitterly, for Catherine, overcome by the unexpected communication of an event which she dreaded, though forced by policy not only to affect approval, but required to exert her interest to bring about — sank back into her chair, her countenance suddenly changing.

"Alas! is it possible!" exclaimed she, quite

off her guard.

"What more probable, Madam?" said Charles; "did you not desire it ardently? did not both you and he entreat me to further your views in that quarter? You praise my zeal in some cases, do so now, I beg — yes, — I rejoice to say, and I am sincere in my joy, that my efforts have been successful."

Catherine's eyes filled with tears, an unusual occurrence with her.

"He must leave us then," said she; "we shall lose the brightest ornament of our Court."

"I feign no sorrow, madam," returned her son; "when Anjou is gone I shall perhaps have

As he speke, the I paid his devoirs respensed his devoirs respensed to meet and hastened to meet and first to hail you as a king The object of our wis the anxious care of I first act be to pay him dom."

Notwithstanding the sake bestowed on her is secret pressure of his has to restrain the feelings was well aware that this is would create, Anjou, una tuosity, cried out—

"My sentence of bani nounced: I am to be outla and debarred of is no change: you well know my aversion to this appointment; my brother knows it also; and it is but mockery to announce it as though it were news I should hear with pleasure."

"I see plainly," said Charles, sarcastically, "that mother and son must depart together; your hearts are so united, that it were cruelty to divide them: but know, both of you, that I have long seen through the slight veil which is now thrown partially aside, and which, I am aware, conceals designs deep and dangerous. I know your lukewarm wishes, your pretended anxiety to obtain, but real wish to avoid, the crown of Poland, - which gained, the actors in various intrigues would be too widely separated. I tell you that these schemes have not deceived L. however, acted with more truth, and what I ordered was done with all my heart: my ambassadors have exerted all their influence and eloquence, have represented my brother as just, wise, merciful, and prudent, and they have succeeded. The kingdom of Poland is yours, with subjects ready to obey and idolize you, almost as much," he said with a sneer, " as you are adored in France. For myself, - last night disposed of many of my enemies; to-day I have the prospect of losing another."

[&]quot;My son," interposed the Queen-mother,

enemy? — say rathe Alençon, who wept to while Henry has prothe utmost. Who no present salutary meas desires the extermina me behold you friend thers — nor cloud the idle dissensions."

"Talk not of joy, starting up furiously,—
ror, of cruel treachery! bring no joy. Well r
why did not I, when at my feet, — when Na
for mercy, — when Coli
brain is on fire when I
I but a murderer?— a
ble wretch, acted upon
ed to eternal inform

you urged me to the commission of a crime so deadly, that every hour of my future existence will be embittered by the hideous vision of it — and you dare to talk to me of joy!"

"Your Grace felt, methinks, but little remorse or pity," said Anjou, scornfully, "when you marked the Huguenotaille from the window of the gallery, and your sure aim proved how little their cries could make your nerves unsteady!"

"Silence — forbear!" cried Catherine, sternly; "the King is ill, — is weak, — and events have so crowded upon him that he is not himself. He will not long permit this idle compassion for undeserving rebels to disturb his quiet and unsettle his temper thus."

"Yes," muttered Charles, recovering himself, while a new expression spread itself over his features, — "yes, they were rebels and traitors, and their fate was merited. Let no one blame me for their punishment."

"None will,—none can, my son," replied Catherine: "they would have overturned the state, destroyed our holy faith, and sacrificed us and our people. Raise not phantoms to harass your mind. Does the judge reproach himself for having pronounced sentence on the criminal? No more, my dearest Charles,—

Catherine had ten she spoke, and was su shoulder; but as she Bianco, the King wil him not-his drugs are proved their potency to misdirected; he has k man of great value to 1 to be pillaged: it is a be long in replacing. I I insist on that man's noxious to me : he shall the court. I had purp sence, and you remind m Catherine replied has Grace intend regulating ture? Am I not to be what concerns my privat methinks, somewhat too n wards your mother and a leave of

companied by the new king of Poland, quitted the presence of Charles.

She despatched immediately to him his Jesuit confessor, Edmond Auger, rightly judging that he would be the most proper person to allay the irritation of the King's mind by his arguments and sophistry. Accordingly the utmost eloquence and cunning were brought into action against the scruples which conscience and reason suggested, and so well did the Jesuit succeed, that the mind of Charles became gradually calmer, and when Auger took his leave the King returned to the closet where he had placed Mabille, and desired her to return to her own apartments, to send to him his physician Ambroise Paré, and to hold herself in readiness to remain with him during the night.

CHAPT

THE RE

I would 'twere but a drea I might be once awake— But night is lodg'd within Darker than the Cimmeria

Ir became evident to I no safety for Claude but and on her return she c what had passed in the Kin "Your life," said she, "through an accidental visit ing I received is now too we it probably pointed to no or For Alix I trust we need n hension: her father is kn

my wretched life if I may not risk it for her sake!"

"Be patient," returned Mabille; "there will be risk enough hereafter. No one could quit the walls of the Louvre at present but with a prospect of certain death. The rest of this fearful night I am to remain with the King. I will use all my endeavours to make him revoke his cruel sentence, to induce him to stay the fury of these wretches to whom the Protestants are given up as a prey; and with the blessing of Heaven I shall succeed. Remain, therefore, for a few more hours here, and I trust to bring you tidings of enlargement."

However unwilling Claude was to agree to this, he felt that there was no remedy, and consented to submit, acknowledging the justice of Mabille's reasoning. She procured for him some necessary refreshment, and entreating him to be cautious and patient led him to the most retired part of her suite of apartments, which he readily promised to secure within from all intrusion, and then, after bidding her adieu, he threw himself on a bed, and, exhausted with watching and distress of mind, was soon buried in sleep.

Far otherwise was it with Charles: he lay in agonies of body and mind, which no remedies

As the night advar restless and uneasy; two, his agitation grew gasped for breath; hi with fear; he clung to terror and exclaimed -"They are there! all around me! I cam sight! What seas of Where are you, Mabille friend, do not desert me saved you; pray for mer lowed a dreadful counse -urged,-forced to con it was whose artful repr forced me to this act. pardon for a wretch like " My dear child," sai " despair not, nor weep s

heart to see you

not disdain your penitence. For me, who owe my life to your clemency, I am bound to pray, and will ever pray for your pardon and consolation, though the crime be indeed deadly which you have been led to commit."

"I could have saved others, and I allowed all to be sacrificed!" sobbed the unfortunate young man. "Poor La Rochefoucauld! We had played together till near midnight. I bade him beware, as I should rouse him in the night to take my revenge for his success. He left me with a jest, and they murdered him in my name! Poor La Rochefoucauld! so cheerful, so merry! Oh God! stabbed with a thousand wounds!—and Teligny, the mildest, gentlest, most confiding of human creatures, to the last asserted my innocence of the massacre! Oh that my list were not all of murders!"

He sank back on his pillow.

"Sire," said Mabille, "take comfort; Ambroise Paré, you know, is saved, and ready to serve you still; and doubtless many others. One I can name whose prayers will join with mine for his deliverer."

"How, Mabille?" said the King, a ray of pleasure brightening his pallid cheek: "whom do you mean? But perchance it is to Navarre that you allude. My sister's tears saved him,

l nank Heaven : Che

her knees and not heedi

"Yes," said Charles; "

me, nurse, of whom then sp "If your Grace will promin safety, I will disclose the

"Doubt me not!" exclarising. "You take a load I would not cause another half the universe!"

Mabille then, happy to distracted mind, and aware which she possessed over he late the circumstances of through the means which the used for her preservation. The particulars he became times he smiled at her dilem his mood grow have

and eloquently, that Charles, entirely overcome, summoned some of his officers, and, with the promptitude and rapidity which characterised him, issued his commands that the massacre should forthwith cease; that strict injunctions should be laid on the Huguenots to keep close in their houses till the excitement was over, and that any infringement of these positive commands should be punished severely.

Having done this, and dismissed his astonished servants, he returned to his couch, and deting Mabille to keep her friend concealed till the had his permission to liberate him, soon after fell into a profound sleep, while she watched by him with all the patience of affection.

THE SE

A Daniel come to judge

The pretty little villa from Paris, had boasted mous Protestant preacher so great and his argume had gained the victory me most subtle and learned bonne. His name was that name had become and of his religion, for trium while he carried on his m singular opinions, love of a ness for novel theories, had the heads of his church

by him. In a very short time, however, all became proselytes to his manner of teaching, and before long his fame spread far and wide, till Paris sent her hundreds to the little church where so great a preacher might be heard.

The Catholic clergy observed his popularity, and the hold he had taken on the minds of the people, with uneasiness, and learned with annoyance that several converts had been made from their own church by his persuasion. They had, therefore, resolved to discover the weak points of his character, and to draw him, if possible, over to their party.

At the time of the "Matines" he was still preaching with great force, and exhorting his congregation to be firm and resist to the last; but unable to contend with the panic which took possession of all, and being himself in the greatest danger, he was obliged to fly with the rest. Being taken, and having had some communication with several of the heads of the Catholic church at Paris, he began to see the utter uselessness of persevering in the reformed profession, and the probability of advancing the cause hereafter by making a semblance of conforming to the Romish faith.

He was artful and designing, and having little real devotion it was not very difficult to

his conscience to dissemble: he accordingly exhibited the desired signs of conversion, and greatly edified some of the Doctors with whom he had before contended, by confessing himself at length convinced by their superior knowledge.

Information was sent to King Charles that he was ready publicly to abjure his errors, and it was concluded that a proper audience on the occasion would be the captive Huguenot princes. Hugues Sureau was therefore brought to Paris, and introduced to the King, who was much satisfied with his demeanour, and held out hopes to him of preferment in the church of his adoption. The King of Navarre, and his sister the Princess Catherine, the Prince and Princess of Condé, and others, were summoned to attend to his discourse, and on the minds of many of them it made a great impression. The Prince of Condé, however, remained firm, and nothing could shake his resolution, nor would he consent to dissimulation, which was the policy recommended to Henry of Navarre by many of his friends.

After a great deal of discussion, and some private exhortations to the young King of Navarre, in which Sureau convinced him that it was for the ultimate good of all parties, that he should appear to conform, Henry gave way, and made his public profession of the Catholic faith, how sincerely, was proved by his subsequent conduct. But his having done so was enough for the occasion, and a day was instantly fixed on which he should attend mass and receive absolution from the Cardinal de Bourbon.

After the ceremony had been performed, all the party adjourned to the cemetery of the Innocents, to visit the spot where a great miracle had been performed, and where the Parisians hurried in crowds to behold so signal a proof of Divine approbation. What the feelings of the new converts might be, it may be as well not to inquire; but all were expected to attend while a popular preacher of the day, Le Père Beauxamis, of the order of Carmelites, delivered a sermon, of which the passages which follow may give a general idea.

The holy father set out by exhorting his congregation to consider how by every occurrence the satisfaction and approval of Heaven had been made manifest.

"" It appears to me," he went on to say, "that the grandeur and magnificence of this

^{*} See Etoile.

thily magnify their nan generous manner in whice their duty.

"Look, my brethren, artifice, the power of diss the discretion used on Look at the elevation of tion, and the boldness a tion. If we consider care we must confess that they glory; and who shall de personages are instrumen the Great Director, in f made evident in all the circ First, by the infatuation a heretics, whom no warning could cause to remove fro to be the theatre of their that the glorious enterpr many months, should not have excited suspicion or uneasiness in the minds of these becotted Pagans!

"Again,—might it not naturally have been feared that his Majesty, from inadvertence, being, as he is, but young, might have allowed the intended plan to transpire?— as, indeed, some of his sayings to these deluded wretches gave them cause for reflection, and did excite momentary doubts, which, however, were soon allayed.

"No; it is evident that Heaven, resolving to put an end to the wicked machinations of these traitorous rebels, prevented their ears from hearing, and their senses from comprehending the meaning which was hidden; for it was decreed that our good King and his benevolent and patient mother, who had too long been victims to the torments inflicted on their minds by these disbolical conspirators, should be at once delivered from them, so that in spite of the worldly knowledge and great endowments of these wicked simers, they were but as fools and children, understanding not the deceits and snares set round about them.

"We must see in this the peculiar grace of God, for they themselves urged their own fate in entreaties to be furnished with guards, and

of the King I was admirably was the granted to the be dues of the Flander beigning that he could like milijacia, inggad di nish a muster-coll of

pointed, subtle, and wise soever, never had its parallel in history ancient or modern!

"Now, my brethren, let us take into consideration another peculiarity: think of the felicity of the time and the hour chosen; think of the wonder that in so brief a space all should have arrived at so happy an ending. We cannot without amazement reflect on this, and must come always to the same conclusion that the whole was a manifestation of the will of God; that it was, in fact, His work, who full of pity and compassion visited them in this remarkable manner.

"Is there not a great and striking resemblance, my dear hearers, between our august and beloved Lady, the Queen-mother, and Queen Blanche of Castile, mother of Saint Louis, who, left a widow with her young son, saw the great lords of the land rise against her, and join themselves with the heretics of Toulouse, called Albigenses, who, exactly similar to these moderns, denied the efficacy of priests, monks, images, the mass, and other similar adjuncts of religion? Those mutinous subjects called to their aid King Peter of Aragon, and great was the battling and danger which ensued; but the victory was obtained by the servants of God, and they were given over to

performed by the ther of the King, have put their hand Were I to enume would be too long tire my hearers v I pass to an outw judgment and appro my dear brethren, i which is at this mom "Look, my belove how the divine pleas tion of this gloriou and admirable as it petual confusion of and to our perpetual tree, which began to and leaves in beautif moment when the firs lence of Huguenots he conclusion of this harangue the enn of the people knew no bounds; they
, leaped, screamed with delight and deand crowding round the miraculous
wed that the deed so happily begun
not fall to the ground for want of perin the drama.

r King Charles himself, so excited was he praise he had received, and the apof his subjects, that he hastened back to ace, and with fearful oaths and execrailled for his Captain of the guard, inm being armed from head to foot, and ly protested that he would sally forth, h his own hand exterminate the Hugueserver he could meet with them.

the Prince de Condé be brought to me 5, he thundered forth. "Let me hear

had had recourse.

Elizabeth of Austria, lent, weak, and cruel softest, gentlest, and m living in comparative of her husband; and, spen in devotional exercises a was seldom seen, and a affair of moment.

Charles had the utm spect for her, and stood character, for he felt th tion were sincere. As a of offering advice, or interpretable to her so totally ignorant was alsure which the policy of suggested, that she went time on the fatal night morning of what had occurred.

less that punishment might be averted from the authors of so deadly a crime.

She was found on her knees in her oratory by Catherine, who sought her on hearing of the furious state in which her son was, and she instantly addressed her with entreaties to go to Charles and endeavour to calm him by her presence, and prevent, if possible, the catastrophe which threatened Condé.

Elizabeth hesitated not to throw off the usual timidity of her character, and assume that of a determined intercessor for the unfortunate. She left her chamber instantly, and sought that of her husband. There a scene awaited her which required all her firmness.

Charles was pacing up and down the room in a state of uncontrollable fury. Before him, cold, pale, and sullen, stood the Prince of Condé, on whom he was heaping every epithet which passion could suggest. "Detested, lying traitor!" he cried wildly, "dare not to answer me! I have been too lenient. I was an idiot to save any of your sect, condemned by Heaven as you are! Hear me, and answer at once, for never more shall the option be given you. Choose mass, the Bastile, or death!"

The Prince looked undauntedly at the infuriated countenance of Charles, and replied —

He darted towards Con at him with his dagger, v ing aside, avoided; and just occupied Charles be affright, the figure of his " Sire!" she exclaim What madness has take brain? Have you not mand to stop the effusiyour own hand recommen " Elizabeth!" cried th hand over his brow, as if stood, "is it you? I thou Lady herself come to c services I had performed." "Rather," said the y "were such a miracle have been to warn you to unfortunate. Dismiss th

you, and calm this agitat

drew hastily from the fury of the maniac who threatened his life.

With adroit tenderness the Queen soothed and appeared the anger of her husband, whose paroxysm was now passed, and looking on her with admiration, he said—

"Elizabeth, you are my guardian angel! would that you were more with me, and that my mother would leave me in peace!"

"Your mother, dearest Charles," said the amiable Princess, "has always your good in view in all she does; blame her not; but suffer not your passionate zeal for religion to overstep the bounds of mercy. The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit: he asks not blood, for he is a God of peace."

"You say right," returned Charles; "and I may flatter myself in possessing in a good and amiable wife a woman the wisest and most virtuous, not in France nor in Europe, but in the whole world!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDO PRINTED BY SAM Bangor House,

HE QUEEN'S POISONER.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
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THE

QUEEN'S POISONER;

OB,

FRANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

A ROMANCE.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

LUTHOR OF " A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES," " SPECIMENS OF THE EARLY POETRY OF PRANCE," ETC.

> Good men's lives Expire before the flowers in their caps. Dying or ere they sicken. Macbeth.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1841.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAYLOFT AND THE STARE.

By day's approach look to be visited.

Shakspeare.

When Montgomery returned to consciousness from a long insensibility, after his perilous flight, he found himself in partial darkness, and was some time before he could comprehend his present situation. After turning and struggling a little he began to be aware that the last desperate effort he had made to avoid his pursuers, had precipitated him through a half-opened door in the roof of a hayloft, into the midst of a stack of hay, and the violence of his fall having loosened some of it from above, it had detached itself, and entirely enveloped him. He felt a sensation of stifling, and cast his arms about to extricate himself, by which means he

B

VOL. II.

der, from his wound, who caused him uneasiness, but he felt faint from hum. He descended from his some difficulty, and grown

He descended from hi some difficulty, and grou rude flight of stairs, dov and alighted in an out-hor Here he paused, and lool what was best to be done long he had remained u posed it must have been di dreadful night and great p as the shades of evening we to fall. His Cordelier's rob stained with blood, and h himself again in the street recognised in consequence; another disguise he knew n tated on the steps he shot voices approaching and t

"I was as close," said the vain little torchmaker, "to the thorn as I am to you, and I should have managed to pluck a flower but that one of the holy Fathers pushed me away; I hope it isn't a sin, but I vow they seemed to me to be stuck on with wax, and to be only made of paper, but there were so many priests round that no one but I got near enough to see. I told my neighbour Petit Jacques, and he said he would not rest till he found out the truth, if he stayed in the cimetière all night."

"I don't believe anything about the miracle,"
returned his companion; "the Saints and the
Blessed Virgin" (crossing himself) "would
rever approve of such wickedness as the murder of the good old Admiral and young Teligni,
the sweetest and mildest-spoken cavalier in
Prance. It was but two days ago he came to
my shop, and stopped while I handed the wine
he ordered to his men; I little thought then
all those fine fellows would be murdered in cold
bleed by the brutal Guises."

"But they say," said Blampignon, "that the King ordered it all."

"No such thing, man," replied the other,
"that can't be; for an order is just issued—
the crier has been calling it at the end of our
treet—that the massacre is not to go on, that

compassion felt by his ventured to show himsel Blampignon, who, utter fear, climbed up into a red down upon him in grantion.

"Good man!" he ex who spoke against the no harm about the King's "Be not alarmed," said

no friend to either, but a cruelty. I throw myself and entreat your assistance

"You shall have it," pompously, scrambling do advancing towards the Co was quite safe, and they w service in their power.

"I have no means of r said Montgomery, "for I am leave this polluted city, given up to slaughter and persecution."

"Why, as I live," said Blampignon, peering in his face, "it is our Cordelier who lodges with Lussaut."

"True, my friend," replied the Count; "but my habit is torn and stained; can you procure me a disguise in which I may be less likely to be known?"

"Here is a carter's frock and cap," said the host, "to which you are welcome; but we must put a white cross on it, otherwise you might not even now be safe; for the ferment is scarcely subsided in the town."

"I will protect you as far as our way lies together," said the torch-maker; "you have only
to keep close to me, and we shall manage them
yet. I am bound to the Grève, where I have
a load of torches to deliver for the firing of the
great stake. Oh! it will be a grand sight;
you had better stay and see it. The King is to
set the first torch; such a fine one, the handle
all over white fleurs de lis—quite a picture. I
shall get quite close to his Grace, and you
would have an excellent position near me."

Montgomery declining this offer made ready to accompany him; and they set out together, but soon separated, as the neighbourhood of the Dame, a procession being he hoped, attract even he hoped, attract even intention was to take a accordingly he hurried the quay, where he say had left their work and ther with earnest gesticuted one, and perceived in the man who had rowed suspicious glances he like on him a sinister look a you want my boat again, you? That will scarcely guise either. There are

taken in that way."

"Friend," said Montgor
to the other side: delay me
The man beckoned to h

with the white cross, but y

a moment the Count was s

have recourse to violent means of ridding himself of their importunities, when a cry arose at a distance—"The procession! the King!" and most of the men rushed away to join the crowd, which was issuing from a neighbouring street.

There were now but a few paces between him and the river, and he urged the first boatman to ferry him over.

"To the other world, Hugenotaille!" brutally exclaimed the man. "What signifies a fête given, if it's to be stopped directly the amusement begins?"

So saying, he drew a knife from his breast, adding, as he brandished it, "'Tis but one more, and I wanted that to make up my number."

But before the stroke fell the arm of the ruffian was grasped from behind, by a young man in the dress of one of the King's household, and he was pinioned in an instant.

Montgomery, who was unarmed, and saw little safety for himself from either of the contending parties, rushed towards the river, and at once plunged in; and being an excellent swimmer, in spite of his wounded arm, contrived to reach the opposite shore. He then looked round, and observed that his young deliverer stood alone, apparently watching him. He waved his hand in token of gratitude, and hur-

tion of the boatmen was paraded the streets of F the present occasion was late events.

the present occasion was late events.

The King, though har and allowed scarcely tin citement, was expected ceremony to the church afterwards to be present a Accordingly, dragging with him, and attended to Court, Charles issued for Louvre, on his way to join and monks, who stopped a Several cardinals and cuous in the crowd walking humility, and bearing whose weight they app which in reality were or

their greater convenience.

His step was trembling from recent ext, but his brow was stern and unbending. him walked, with an appearance of great and devotion, carrying conspicuously a sary, and casting his eyes to heaven as the Queen's perfumer, René Bianco. He head of all marched a singularly atture, clothed in a garment of tarnished gold, apparently much injured by time up, and so scanty as scarcely to afford a property. This allegorical personage, the meanwhose garb was variously interpreted, oft the banner of St. Denis, the sacred

he relics that could be collected from rches in Paris and the environs, were in their respective *chasses* by an eccledignitary.

Bishop of St. Flour bore the Sacred; he of Evreux a phial containing a drop nilk of the Holy Virgin; the Archbishop the miraculous blood. Others were the of pieces of the true cross, of the sacred, thorns of the holy crown, pieces of the and scourge, a hair of S'te Marie, fragof her robe, veil, &c. and the entire body of the Holy Innocents.

e and there appeared monks of attenuated

angels in great number this occasion permitted King had declared that devotional feelings; oth holy sisters who were in themselves among the scandal, and sometimes to observers.

A solemn mass over, panied only by his guard proceeded to the Place do fire was to be exhibited, s eve of St. John, with a fe nies, in commemoration of was termed.

In the centre of the grea the stake, sixty feet high, and bundles of brushwood vals, and at its foot a huge The chief magistrates of the city, in their robes of state, attended, the Prévôts and Sheriffs holding candles of yellow wax. These persons, approaching the King, assisted him to dismount from his horse, and presented him with an ornamented torch, alight. An immense troop of archers, cross-bowmen, and arquebusiers, surrounded the pile, and kept off the multitude, who pressed forward to see the King advance, which he presently did, and set his torch to the pile, the blazing of which was accompanied by the sound of trumpets and other noisy instruments.

As the flames rose high in the air the deafening shouts of the people, and the loud crackling of the fireworks, which were at the same moment discharged, proclaimed the general satisfaction, and many and fierce were the maledictions uttered against the heretics, and wishes that they occupied the place of the wretched animals consumed in the baskets.

He who had the courage to climb amongst the blazing pile, detach the flag from its elevation, and lay it at the King's feet, was entitled to a purse from his hand; and seldom on these occasions was there wanting an adventurous person to attempt the enterprise, though, considering the strength of the scaffolding, and that anxious expectation, a s long deformed arms and l clinging like a monkey wreaths of smoke and f grinned with exultation most height he laid his staff and succeeded in most of it.

of it.

"Well done, Ancelin!"

"Success to the handsome as the hideous little being pidity; and leaping from a briskly to the King's feet trophy. The reward was a further mark of favour, accompany the train of the Hôtel de Ville, where stunned with the noise, ar smoke, was not sorry to tak

royal arms in gilded sugar; also a variety of creams and fruit.

It was not without fear and trembling, that the Prévôt de Paris, Nantouillet, heard his Majesty say, that he still kept to his intention of paying his hotel a visit.

"You shall have," said he, "three Kings to grace your board; myself, the King of Poland by brother, and the King of Navarre. We will bring our friends, and you shall invite what belies you please. As you are a bachelor, toubtless you will find many fair ones ready to visit you; and La Touchet and La Chateauneuf thall be our hostesses. I will name an early thy, as I am not afraid of finding you unprepared."

The Prévôt stammered his grateful sense of the honour intended him, and his humble hope of meeting the wishes of his royal guests; but the freshness of his pride was gone, his enthuman had received a check, and the mere sight of the distinguished persons, of whom he was before so fain to speak familiarly, gave him a feeling of sick terror, which he vainly tried to get the better of.

"Methinks this churl," said the King of Poland to King Charles, "does not appreciate our condescension. Surely the slave dares not "I purpose so to do smile such as seldom an nance when he spoke to agreement with his own he him that, for the time, he reserve to him whom he "Yes, we will dine at some plot that shall give the greedy citizen a grue speeches, and his bad e orders respecting this can I trust, I am to hear no me

"We will consult La I said the chosen of the P have always such choice these lowbred serfs who ap will make ourselves talked of Paris."

Nantouillet did not hea

hailed their departure, and had bowed out the last of their train.

"I shall quit Paris instantly," said he to his housekeeper, on returning to the Hôtel d'Hercule: "my nerves will not endure the terror these great lords, Kings, and gentry inspire me with. I will pretend to be sick, anything to escape the honour of this horrible visit. Invite La Chateauneuf! alas! the vixen who they say is too familiar with the Duke of Anjou! The Saints forbid! And my niece Touchet: I have heard such things of her and the King lately, which her father's mind would never have concived. I wondered at all her talk of great folks: she has known them to some purpose! Oh why did I ever come to Paris and set up as a great man?"

CHAPT

ENDYM

For knowing the A saint of such As all desire but A place in her I rather choose to Than venture t

The agitation and grief is of Navarre had been throw effect upon her health, and confined herself to her apar was shared by Marie Prince dear and favourite friend, N rigni, to whom she was gree care of her nurse had resto fortunate fugitive, who had

amendment with the deepest interest, as they would a flower which they were anxious to preserve, from withering, so frail and fragile appeared the being who had been exposed to such severe treatment. He seemed not to be more than eighteen years of age, was delicately fair, tall, graceful, and with a voice in singing and speaking, musical as a bird's, so soft, low, and plaintive, that its tone was the very echo of sad thoughts. This they had often an opportunity of hearing, for as he lay on his couch of sickness, he would warble the most touching strains, always expressive of disappointed or despairing love; and as such suited the mood of both the princesses, they derived the greatest satisfaction from listening to his music.

They had refrained from asking him to relate his history, and the circumstances which led to his late danger, fearing to agitate his weak frame; they were, therefore, entirely ignorant of his rank or condition, but they judged that he was of gentle blood by his conversation and manners: that he was a poet, they soon learnt, and a musician, and that he cherished an unhappy passion was not difficult to guess by his songs. Marguerite, recollecting his words when he fell at her feet, thought she could have supplied the information necessary; but as she

Separated from their ignorance of all that was denied access to the or house, and permitted on from Queen Elizabeth, generally on moral and a would have found the moral some, particularly Margutomed to constant amust but for the interest the patient.

Day after day they sat talking, or singing, to ar times he would sleep cal him, while slowly, but w was gathering on his chee turning to his expressive ar

One morning, thinking to princesses conversed in a l specting him. give him pain by renewing the subject. His story must be singular, I would I knew it."

As she spoke the curtain was drawn aside, and the invalid leaning forward addressed her:

"Madam," said he, "if one so destitute of all claim except that of eternal gratitude for your gracious pity and compassion might ask a boon I would entreat never to be called by any name but that of Endymion;" he blushed deeply as he spoke, and went on trembling to say, "My history is soon told. I am the son of a gentleman of Brittany: I dare reveal no more. I had heard in my solitude of the beauty of a lady of the Court, and was seized with so strong a desire to behold her, that I left my home and travelled to Paris for that purpose alone. I saw her, and from that moment I became her slave. I knew she would never deign to bestow a thought on one so much her inferior in birth and station; I knew my love was like that of the moth for the flame! that she I adored was ignorant of my existence, and would never be aware of my attachment, yet my whole soul was given up to love-it was my atmosphere, my existence. Alas! in my romantic land of Brittany, we believe that the nymphs or fairies of woods and fountains can

saw one of these fatal b that hour that the passic session of me; her ima and to behold her in end of all my desires. who excels all those amo is the reality of the vis beside that fountain in m "This is a charming di Marguerite, with a smile; and we are bound to be you tell us. Your life visionary one, and I fear so. But what are all ou but shadows?-and the lo happiness or misery of an e of the fountain. Hencefor by the name you have ch sire to know another. Be this mystery is pleasing to n Endymion was silent a moment, and cast down his eyes; then, with a deep sigh, resumed:

"My love is all-sufficient for my heart; I have never, I shall never seek to reveal it, though its object were to be ever near me. I know it would cause her uneasiness, and I should dread her sorrow, even more than I should tremble at her frown or shrink from her disdain. I am not so daring nor so imprudent as the unfortunate Chatelar. I will not follow in his footsteps, though I love to repeat his strains. This, fair princess, is one of the last he composed on his hapless attachment."

As if dreaming, his head sunk back upon his pillow, he cast his fine eyes upwards, and, in his low plaintive voice, breathed the following dity:—

CHATELAR TO MARIE STUART.

 The time was once, when war and fame
For me had charms all else above;
When to obtain a hero's name
Amongst the youth of France I strove;
But since that form of light I knew,
Renown a shadow seemed to be!—
My only bliss was in thy view,
My only fame—to die for thee!

The bird that sings the livelong night,
If he should love some glorious star,
Must perish in its glowing light;
That will not stoop to earth so far.
All that I dared to dream is o'er;
Thy praise shall wake no more from me;
Then chill me with thy frowns no more,
The cloud is past—I die for thee!

The voice of the singer died away in soft murs, and as his song ended, his hands which had been clasped fell by his side motionless, and he appeared quite overcome with his emotion.

"Endymion," said the Princess de Conde" we must not allow you to exhaust yourself thus. Sleep, sleep, young enthusiast, and we will each sing you a soothing strain that you may see we feel with you and for you. Remain silent,—I will fetch my lute and try to emulate your lovely voice, and if I fail dear Marguerite will make amends when her turn comes, or La Torigni shall shame my want of skill with her soft touch and sighing tone."

So saying, the beautiful and indulgent nurse took her lute and sang:—

THE PRINCESS MARIE'S SONG.

Can the Dove put off the ring
Nature round her neck has thrown?
Can the crested Heron fling
From his graceful head the crown?
Can the widow's flower of jet
All her downy specks remove?
Or my heart the faith forget,
Taught and kept alive by love?

Though no more the waters flow,
In the shell their sounds remain:
On the Ermine's skin of snow
May not rest the faintest stain;
Thus Love's star, with steady ray,
In my heart can ne'er decline,
Follows thee, though far away,
And its purest light is thine!

The sweet voice of the Princess had imparted a beauty to this sentiment, which the invalid acknowledged by a sigh; but he obeyed her playful command not to speak; when the charming Gillone, always called La Torigni, whose wit, beauty, and grace made her so great a favourite with her royal mistress, to whom she was tenderly attached, took up the lute, and tuning it with skill, sang as follows:—

Oh! give But dis 'The work Withou Oh! give It is not

In life's saw With day The present May yield Oh! give m What mo

"I will sing you the instrument from ballad of my own, the return of my François, as he del captivity in Spain; changed for him on and he once more fe

MARGUERITE'S SONG.

THE RETURN OF FRANCIS I.

Dat forth, like light, my Arab steed, Leave far behind detested Spain;— From torturing doubt, from bondage freed, I feel I am a King again!

Farewell, my children !—had my heart
A place for aught but frenzied joys,
Twere bitter thus with ye to part,
My own beloved,—my noble boys!

Igo-your blest return shall be
My guiding hope, my tend'rest care;
800n, soon shall France my children see
The glory of their father share.

Forward, my steed! As on we fly
What erowding thoughts rush through my brain!
For, oh! exulting memory!
I am, I am a King again!

When, all but fame and honour lost, I fell, a captive to my foe, In conquest, in ambition crost, Consign'd to fetters and to woe,

My wand'ring soul has often flown
Across yon Bidassoa's bound,
Once more, attendant on my throne,
Glory, and joy, and love I found.
You

Dear Marguerite her magic lay
Waked there for me with witching voice,
And gentle Claude awhile was gay,
That happy Francis might rejoice.

My queenly mother's brow of pride
Was smooth'd, and shone that joyful hour
On him who hail'd her by his side
The honour'd partner of his power.

There Bayard, Virtue's champion, met
His brothers 'midst that charmed ring,
And Bourbon, ere he dared forget
His fame, his country, and his King!

Once more fair forms and sparkling eyes
Were fair and bright for me alone:
For me to choose each willing prize;
And lovely Françoise was my own!

Where is she now? Once o'er my sleep A sad, a fearful vision came; It told such vengeance dark and deep, I dare not think, I may not name.

Oh, Françoise! may no adverse fate
Divide me ever more from thee;
My crime deserved thy husband's hate;
But he,——oh! he deserved not thee!

I come to dry those flowing tears,

To shield thee in this throbbing heart;

Away, away, my idle fears!

Was love like ours ordain'd to part?

Beloved France! again, again
Thy echoes shall my triumphs ring!
Hence, far from bondage and from Spain,
Your Francis is once more a King!

CHAPTER III.

THE AVOWAL.

On rencontre l'ami avec qui l'on voudrait passer ses jours, su moment où le sort va le fixer loin de nous: on decouvre le œur que l'on cherchoit, la veille du jour où ce cœur va cesser de battre.—St. Augustin.

CLAUDE had remained sleeping, overcome with the heaviness of grief and the fatigue of His dreams restored to him the watching. mow-clad mountains of the country he called his romantic Bearne, and the childish occupations and pleasures of years gone by. Shadows fitted across his fancy which had never visited in his waking moments, and forms, of which he had no recollection, appeared familiarly connected with all that occurred to him. The students, the Cordelier, the face of Bianco, rose to his imagination, and mixed themselves up with contention and massacre. The image of Alix in danger, struggling and calling to him for help, recurred frequently. He tried to reach her, and she was held from him by her

a chain of hair, which and making a violent He had risen from h found he held in his constantly wore round he saw so clearly in hi sole relic of his forme in every direction, hopi which René had found effect. It seemed sir should have known wha much care, and he regr learnt the secret at that but little likely to atta he so much desired.

While he was reflect Mabille's step approach the beloved chain in hi tated and pale, but reconssed bet

The King was seated on a couch, supported by cushions; his countenance was careworn and ad, his brow contracted, and his head languidly reclined on his hand. Attached to literature and the arts, he was accustomed in his leisure moments to devote his attention to those compositions which then formed the delight of the Court. A poet himself, he understood and was fond of the works of most of the great writers of the day; and those chosen few who bore the high-sounding title of Poëtes de la Pléiade were all encouraged and admired by him. The works of De Baïf, Remy Belleau, Jodelle, and the rest of those favourites of the Muses, he studied with much interest; and to Pierre Ronsard, the first of all, he addressed many friendly poetical epistles, and rewarded his merit by bestowing on him two priories.

The volume which he had now opened was not, however, composed by any of these authors, but was a romance, held in much esteem at the period, the heroic history of the four sons of Aymon. His mind evidently wandered from the subject, and it was only by an effort that he could fix his attention to what he read. One passage startled his awakened conscience by its appropriate allusion; with an agitated eye he looked on the following words:—

sentence he saw still most wished to avoid.

"The Duke assen good prince who see wisest and most prude who gathers his slaves oblige them to grant twicked, cruel, and unj

Charles shuddered, a a new page; but he racter of Ganelon, the displeasure.

"Naturally brave, or cious, the least merciful was always that which h

He cast the book from rage and remorse. "Med, in the bitterness of thing I see, everything I me that I am a wrete."

nk into a reverie from which the enf Mabille roused him. Looking wildly le he exclaimed,—

me not behold one of that race of -take him away! I see by his wan it he comes to haunt me."

"said Mabille gently, as she approach"be calm I entreat you. I bring a
being who comes to thank his royal
r both for himself and for your poor
s friend."

, dear Mabille," cried Charles, emher with almost childish fondness, saved my own dear nurse, the only the whole world who loves me!"

not so, sire," answered she, "I beseech ur subjects love you, and none more by whom cruel and interested persons represented to your Grace."

y have no cause," groaned the miseraig monarch; "but let your friend aphe need not fear me."

e accordingly came forward, and was ly questioned by Charles on several elative to his fortunate escape, his conrith the house of Navarre, and his pror the future.

he latter subject Claude professed his

hereafter.

Charles mused a mon "I know not how far you beyond the walls of at liberty to remain her tranquillity is restored t You can assume the liver page to Dame Mabille, al believed that you are a Ca great risk. It is not diffi bitterly-"your Prince H that lesson, but communic his party. I will have You are free - disguise yo

The King smiled, for t affair seemed to amuse him from more serious matters, him graciously; while Claude

and take heed that your

not."

Mabille lost no time in procuring for him a ess similar to those worn by the servants of royal household, and gave out that he was relation of her own, just received into the vice of the King, and appointed as attendant herself, now that her time was greatly occuin waiting on his Grace. In this guise, having darkened his complexion as much as ible, and dved his evebrows and hair, he d with difficulty be recognized, except by quick eye of affection, or the equally keen ce of hatred. The latter he proposed to d as much as possible by shunning the pree of René, should they encounter in the ce. In this disguise Claude resolved to forth as soon as possible, and seek the ident's house, hoping to learn news of her occupied all his thoughts.

hey had ascertained that Bianco accompathe procession; and judging that the occuon thus given to the populace would render ss dangerous for them to venture out, Maand her supposed page took their way to habitation of Bailly. It required the couof love, or friendship of such an order as which the good nurse felt for Alix, to le them to pass through the streets. At step traces of the most hideous kind were

the palace told the committed near them: defaced and half-burn shops and their few glothe heaps of stones, and weapons, all told a tamind to dwell upon.

"And Alix!" though of all this carnage and uninjured?"

At length they reached but were at first stout Mabille, however, induce knew her, to inform Alix her, and she was according but she took the precaution to remain in the antechal moned, lest his too real excite suspicion. He was to submit to this arrest.

intraion, and the moments he passed in this supense were full of agony and impatience.

The nurse found her unhappy young friend, who flew to throw herself into her arms, and weep upon her bosom, while she recounted all that had occurred to her on the night of the beginning of the massacre.

"I have but one means left me of escape,"
mid she; "that is my only resource, and to
that I shall be obliged to resort. But tell me,
iter Mabille! oh, tell me, can you conjecture
what has been the fate of the unfortunate
Clande? The massacre, supposed to be conknded, is far from being so. It is not so open
to before, but our people are falling in every
treet, in every house, and there is none to
teliver them!"

"Dear Alix!" said the nurse, "take comlet, Claude Emars is in safety, and under the potection of the King!"

With a sudden burst of joy, Alix cast herself her knees and returned thanks to Heaven her his preservation. Earnestly did she listen while Mabille recounted all the particulars attacking their mutual escape. When she had concluded, the daughter of the President exclaimed.

"Heaven be praised for this signal mercy!

gang of wretches who Alas! Paris is at this and murderers, restrai divine!"

"He is, my dear c
disguised, by the com
as my page; and if he
his deadly foe, may ren
distraction to know yo
other consideration, an
hither."

"Oh, heavens!" cries as death. "Here! in the full of danger for him!—to quit these walls, for she I could not answer for his Bianco would discover he guise, so deadly does his no," she continued, "he he sake! I must see him.

test of Alix, whose extended hand he clasped in uncontrolable emotion, while she stood bathed in tears, and looking on him with interest which it was vain to attempt to conceal.

"Do I behold you indeed in safety?" cried Claude; "whatever trials may henceforth await me I can endure them without a murmur, since your life, so far more precious than my own, is secure."

"Alas!" replied Alix, scarcely conscious of the warmth of his expressions in the delight she falt at seeing him after the terrors she had experienced while believing him exposed to danger, "you must be gone: this place is but a sepulchre for you; come not near me, attempt not to see me, for I can only bring de struction on my friends."

"Oh! were it possible," exclaimed Claude, "that to my joy in beholding you safe I could add the power of serving you, weak, helpless as I am, with all the high desire to be of the, and chained to earth by the sordid misery of my condition."

"You have a heart, Claude," said Alix, firmly, "and an arm for your country and your friends. Our party is not yet abandoned, our came is not yet crushed; it only wants defendent, and it will once more revive, nay, one day

new ardour. Why show be useful in our cause? of all besides, I have you hood. Blessings on you hope, for this ray which ambition. Oh! were but he once more lead on hout the time shall come will rise to revenge this had otherwise slept, and avenged."

"Speak not of venge Alix. "Heaven will take strive for justice and for cause will prosper. It was my father tell that the br. Rochelle refused to admit sent to their town; they orders, and have thrown off. "Is it possible?" cried Ch.

farthering the good intent: should you be able to reach La Rochelle, my uncle De Hommet, who holds a high position there, may be of service. Take this ring, therefore, as it may happen," she continued, while her voice faltered;—ait may happen that we shall not meet again,—at all events you can provide yourself with this token, which he will know, for it was his last gift to his dead sister, and tell my cousin lassaline, that I grieve in secret for our long apparation, doomed perhaps to he eternal!"

As she spoke, she took from her finger a ring which Claude received with emotion; her tears flowed fast, and it was with difficulty he was able to utter in broken sentences.

"Dear madam—Alix—let us hope that this cloud will pass away, and that many bappy hours are yet in store for you."

"No," said Alix, throwing herself into a seat, wercome with grief; "no, there is no choice in me but death. I cannot be the wife of the detected Bianco!"

"His wife!" cried Claude, starting, while every nerve trembled with horror:—"his wife! death were indeed better; but what dreadful alternative do you propose? Can it be possible that you have no choice left?"

"Alas!" exclaimed Alix, "to save my fa-

I must be a slictual of You must make a

passionately. "Oh, A when I dare to make danger only could draw torn with a thousand fe ed with a thousand term with indulgence a wre posed to the same dan fessing the same pure you, and who dares to 1 who has no hope nor ev would perish to serve,—ti away from me, though I tion: I can endure all; your servant: I ask but devote my life to aid you. who is unworthy even to be your uncle in La Rochelle duct von

and respect. The moment you are safe in protection of De Hommet, I will quit your nor shall my presumptuous passion ever intrude on your peaceful solitude."

rried away by the impetuosity of his feel-Claude had, in discovering the state of his ons, convinced Alix, but too clearly, how her own corresponded with her lover's. , therefore, with secret joy, though with shment and consternation that she listened roposal which in the devoted generosity of ind, rather than instigated by prudence, I made.

h Claude," she said gently, "your words id and strange, and you propose impossible believe me I forgive, and am grateful zeal which prompts you to offer a protechich I cannot accept; and which, indeed, ceive yourself in supposing you could afsing as you are proscribed and fugitive." In heavens!" returned Claude—"it is true; I deserve that you should reject ak assistance. I have dared to address I scarcely conceived it possible for me we done. I know but too well how uny I must appear of your slightest regard a distinction of our station, even if your ion had been less—"

ness. We are fatally—
rated. I see no hope f
myself: had it been of
have hesitated to acknow
flying from you, I had r
you with brighter prospec
had assured you that neith
ference caused me to liste
without one word of com
tated.

"Say but," said Claude, but that I am not contemne

"No, Claude," replied teemed, regretted !"

As she pronounced the 1 ted the chamber, leaving C scious whether sorrow or de nant in his mind.

Mabille had remained in during the latter part of this

prepared to return to the palace, and Claude baving seen her safely to the gates, had lingered behind to gaze on the spectacle of confusion which all around presented, when he was attracted by a crowd, and the vociferous exclamation and fierce gestures of a party of boatmen. Conceiving that some Protestants were in danger, he hurried towards the group in time, as has been already recounted, to rescue from outrage, and probably death, a man in the dress of a peasant, in whom, however, he thought he recognised his former acquaintance of a moment, the Cordelier, and, but for the prompt and bold method taken by the person assailed to escape, namely, by leaping into the river, his exertions had probably been in vain. He represented to the brutal boatmen that the King's late orders were positive that no Huguenot should be attacked, and as he appeared in the livery of the royal household, the man reluctantly and sullenly shook off his hold and slunk muttering away, while he had the satisfaction of seeing the bold swimmer reach the opposite shore in safety. He then returned hastily to the Louvre, as he feared the royal cortège, which was now approaching, would shortly arrive, and render his entrance less easy.

CHAPTER

LE PETIT FEUI

Dost know this water

In one of the fashionable the neighbourhood of the palla Mole, the most elegant, recavalier in Paris, who gave of taste, and whose fiat decthe modes of the day.

He and his inseparable Coconnas, had distinguished in the late business, and pr the reputation of good cruelty to the devoted sec great object to exterminate.

Both were, a few days aft

songs of Ronsard, fragments of which he every now and then sang in a clear, rich voice, evidently enjoying the beauty of the poetry, and charmed with the learned allusions of the author. He was less handsome than his companion, but had a distinguished air and a fault-less figure, of which he was extremely vain. His peculiarly small foot and hand were the objects of his devoted admiration; and he held all who possessed not these beauties as worth-less in the scale of existence, and beneath the notice of a man who was looked upon as a gentleman.

La Mole continued to turn over the papers on his table with one white hand, whose delicacy might vie with that of his friend, and with the other combed with a small comb of mother-of-pearl his luxuriant moustache, whose extremities he was careful to guide into an upward curl, then considered necessary to perfect propriety.

"Belistre!" he exclaimed, at length, to his attendant; "miserable dolt and idiot! why were not these given to me before?"

"My lord," answered, the valet, in the humblest accent, "was so occupied, — so enthusiastically engaged in the extermination of the Huguenotaille, that his slave did not venture."

"True, - I had forgotten," said the great

were left alone.

"Lay aside the divinas," resumed La Molhere is something of the which we must attend is becoming positively ing to reflect upon the falling,—retrograding to consideration of a few ping us with shame before Listen and attend, and of the state of the sta

He opened a paper, ar
"The humble petitic
lately arrived in Paris
most noble, renowned,
Count Boniface la M
wrongs, the righter of ir
of taste, the only true g
arts: praving by

delectable representations. Being at this present period deprived of permission to do the same by order of the Procureur-General, who is pleased to consider the prices of admission, namely, four, five, and six sous, according to the places, as exorbitant. Whereas the said Alberto humbly showeth, that his company, being the best in the whole world that ever has or can appear, as all persons of taste must acknowledge, also that he is forced to pay a high rent for the theatre, is constrained to make the said charge, and would entreat his Grace's elemency in his case."

"This is the substance," cried La Mole, "of this unfortunate man's petition. Oh! holy saints! that it should be necessary to make it! but he shall be rescued from oppression. He shall come out triumphantly; the King has a heart, and will feel for his subjects writhing under the tyranny of a grovelling Procureur. We will patronize these worthy players; it shall be a law,—a duty, to visit them. The King's consent had better be gained, because one would not willingly leave him out of the party: but I shall take care that they succeed. I will instantly send orders round to the court that a day be named to witness these representations, and to be absent from them will

henceforth be a mark of churlish breeding. Nothing, my dear Coconnas, should be endured in Paris but Italian comedians: they are the only beings to whom nature has granted taste or talent,—they have voices to warble, they have feet to dance, denied to all others. Great Jupiter! to think we should be deprived of our Italians! Better perish, like these accursed Huguenots! to hear one of whose hoarse psalms, droned out by a congregation of them, is to take leave of existence with disgust. Were it for nothing but the depravity of their taste, they deserve the fate which they are now suffering."

"Most true," said Coconnas. "My ears have been during the execution of my late duties so stunned and shocked by the sounds they have emitted in their conventicles, that they are scarcely fit to listen to any but heathen converse, till purified by hearing the dulcet notes of an Italian tongue. Willingly will I lend my aid to assist these persecuted foreigners, dear as they deservedly are to every soul that can feel."

"The sun shall not go down before their fame is established," said La Mole; "would that we lived in those delicious realms where harmony can be commanded by the sword. I would have a musical company made so perfect that

none could find the shadow of a fault in any one performer; but the great end must be achieved thus:— every Saturday that wretch's life should be taken from him, who in the course of the week had uttered a false note, and he should be replaced by another, tried and proved; by this means, a second offence would rarely be committed, and one could listen until Paradise seemed spreading round, and its angels warbling their divine strains to our enraptured senses!"

"My friend!" exclaimed Coconnas, with warmth, "you inspire me with zeal and pleasure; already I feel a new creature. I will hasten myself to these Italians, and make glad their hearts by my communications."

"Do so," said La Mole: "this is nearly my hour of devotion, and I have much of importance to consult about with Cosmo Ruggieri, previously; leave me therefore, dear Coconnas; to you I delegate my authority; see that Alberto and his troop are well bestowed—till two hours hence, farewell!"

La Mole sunk back in his seat while Coconnas rose from his, and after a little delay, that his nerves might not be overwhelmed by too much haste, he threw his short embroidered cloak over his shoulders, gazed at his fine

at the back, kisseu friend, and glided out o He was scarcely depart mo Ruggieri the philo This was the well-known mother, whose deep rese gained him great reputa was said to have in his Secrets itself, a fact which Bianco, who, though obli panionship, held him as one; but as he possessi nionable and agreeable fumer, Catherine held hi of favour. Nevertheless signing men, aware that himself, would willingly other's absence and disgr. ly lying in wait for a con do so.

nad failed to receive a visit from the er Royal.

as ushered into the study of La Mole, inced towards him with a grave step. ture was tall, and his figure slight, a flowing white beard, which covered his was the only indication of age about his face was smooth, and his eyes iercing, and remarkably bright. These ances gave colour to the report that he ewed his youth by art, and that, as some nee of age was said always to be borne in sunder this spell, he had chosen the e appendage which distinguished him, nowise took from the imposing charactic face, and answered his purpose com-

His anecdotes were extraordinary of ne by: he appeared always to have lived art, either in France or other countries, ke of his personal knowledge of many ed characters of history. He feigned to eased if asked to explain how he could, pparent age, have known them, and it thought a mark of ill-breeding to quesmysterious philosopher, who was listenth awe, and regarded as a being of a belonging to a distant world. As it ionable to credit him, those who treated

the charmed pale, the contemned and ridicul and patrons, among wh tinguished was Count 1

The man of fashion with great cordiality. he, "I have much for waxen image which you me has done its duty, complain of. The ladic kind, and I meet with I feel inclined to solicit less, without your learn tremely at a loss, becautain the planet which go I would win, I cannot figure."

"True," replied Cost necessary to be known; of note whose pativities e influence is requisite, you must prick neart in the spot above which the planet repeating, of course, the words in whose ing I have instructed you."

This I have done, father," said La Mole, only; "but you will, perhaps, start to hear I at this moment pursue three different. I am enamoured of three persons, all in site spheres of life, whose planets are unn to me. The name of the first under a of the deepest secrecy, I will first imand you must regulate our proceedings

leant forward, and whispered in the astros ear a name at which he seemed sur-

dingly."

This," said Cosmo, "is difficult indeed, but mpossible; but will demand a separate. All that is royal stands apart from the fearth, and acts not in concert with it. It ake time and study, and I must employ construction all the metals, and watch the ts for the proper period of combining them. ever, it fortunately happens," he added, g from under his robe a small book and lting it, "that your star is placed at this nt so happily that anything undertaken by you now is likely to succeed."

the first - I will prom. at You will REME IS NO. date hat oppose it, an he maney; it deposis of feet processed by the will be trimplet; but to fear. I will begin for You sheeve, I shall a svers to the sea, being I shall want much, beca cautly, "it is on the n Venus will determine th necessary. The iron will Jupiter the tin, on Satur Mercury the quickelver, mover of all. But tell m the others with ____

few traitorous heretics are swept out of his path."

"Why," said Ruggieri, "she is so lately here that I have not regarded her; but since your lordship takes an interest in her, I will try to visit her, and you shall straightway know all that is necessary. But the third?"

"Oh — the third," replied La Mole, "stands in another position altogether."

"If the honoured fair," said Cosmo, smiling, "is a citizen's or peasant's daughter there need be no magic in the case, perhaps."

"She is neither," returned La Mole. "I should not, of course, require the aid I seek if I had time or inclination to exert the talents or fascinations with which I am quite aware that nature has gifted me; but, my dear Ruggieri, time to me is everything. These things must be ready to my hand, or I have no relish for them; and if by my expending a little paltry gold I can procure your kind assistance, why should I give myself the trouble of seeing, and seeking, and doubting, and fearing, like a mere troubadour? The beauty who attracts me now is the daughter of Bailly; he who is president of accounts, and in good favour at this moment. She is placed in an intermediate rank, and consequently difficult to approach."

such a fate. She merit wife of a low perfumer Queen's favour he may s

"My lord," said Ruggi I can do to serve you, co friend, and I should be a turn; yet, to forward you selfish considerations."

"I shall," said the couscheme to see this little purch she is, again, and we the how and the when to go My mind begins to be fat thought. Attend, my dear image; that is my chief cono objection to leave, at Hark! I hear a well-know of my confessor, Montgail his name, comes dancing that is bound bith.

As La Mole spoke he crossed himself dewordy, for his attention to the forms of religion was so exemplary and edifying that it was a theme of universal remark. The King himself was accustomed to say, that the number of sins La Mole had committed might be easily known by the masses he said; and seldom did a day was in which he had not heard three.

A gentle tap at the private door of the courtier's study announced the holy man, and Cosmo stiring, entrance was given to the singular character, in whose keeping was the conscience of the accomplished, unprincipled, prince of exacombs, La Mole.

Bernard Percin de Montgaillard was of the water of Feuillans, who at this period were not established in a convent of their own at Paris, but for whom the care of the Queen-mother was endeavouring to provide one near the royal gardens. He was esteemed one of the most chaptent preachers of his time; had a fine, clear voice, of which he was very vain, and the echo of which he appeared to delight in hearing; he was followed and admired by all the court party, particularly the female part, to whom, indeed, his sermons were generally addressed, and for whose admiration he strove, for whose applause he sighed, wept, was power-

···· resurronable me

Montgaillard was sm pulent: owing to a defec very lame, which misfort conceal under a constant amounting to a dance.

He wore his beard long blished rules respecting sion, and had with difficu into the order to which h quence of his determined which he considered pecul physiognomy. His little ! out from beneath a cowl w back, and thus display his which it pained him to conslung over one shoulder, as was the custom with prel distinction, he wore a gold pearls intermixed with fine

able annoyance, it was short and flat. As he entered the apartment he held up his robe with an affected air, and fanned himself with an embroidered handkerchief, from which issued a strong perfume of musk.

"How is it with you, beau et révérend?" exclaimed La Mole, rising; "how exquisite you look this morning! radiant with success, no doubt?"

"Yes," said Le Petit Feuillant, as he was familiarly termed,—"passibly so; two sweet creatures fainted at my sermon this morning, and I give you my word, to hear the sobs of others, and witness their streaming tears almost unmanned me. I will be less pathetic to-morrow, for it grieves me to cause them sorrow who should be all smiles and joy; however, we parted gaily, for I told them my next discourse should be on a subject which would call forth all their interest,—that of love—Heavenly love of course; —don't you think it a charming theme?"

"Perfect!" said La Mole; "but you are positively becoming too dangerous a rival; no eyes at church but are for you; no conversation out of it but is of you: and who has a chance when you are near?"

The gratified abbé simperingly replied in

a humble tone, "Alas! my thoughts are spiritual; my metaphors, though drawn searth, aspire above; my conquests, thou mundane, lead to the celestial abode, and should grieve to interfere with the fair gallest of the day, but that by doing so I draw the hearts of all to serious musings. But say, m son, shall we begin our devotional exercises? I order that, those accomplished, I may have leisure to recount to you a few amusing saw dotes and lively adventures of certain perms whom you know."

This hint was enough; La Mole instanticomplied with the holy father's desire, and the ceremony of confession was gone through with all due gravity: absolution being bestowed, as every particular strictly attended to, Le Put Feuillant cast aside his clerical character as assumed that for which he was so well fitted namely, confidant of the worldly business of pleasure of his penitent, and retailer of all the scandal of the Court.

"In the first place, have you heard," so he, "of the new favourite of La Lune?—d has the most exquisite little lover that has evappeared — a sort of fairy or sylvan, con from no one knows where,—and arrived at he Court, no one knows how; he is heard sings at all hours in the night, and being sick, is tended by half a dozen princesses. He is said to talk in fairy language, and is beautiful as morn: they call him Endymion, and he is quite a gem in the darkness of our Urania's fate."

"How! a rival!" cried La Mole;—"cruel stars! why am I thwarted thus!—I hoped, so long has she been unprovided with a new lover, that a place was left at her feet."

"It is too ridiculous," said the monk, "to be believed; but it has been said that the divine Marguerite is actually in love with the Bearnais, and that is the reason that, of late, no new aspirant has appeared for her favour."

"Monstrous!" said La Mole, indignantly: "that I will never believe: I know she cares not for D'Entraguet, nor Tavannes, nor fifty others; but the Bearnais—that would be too preposterous! By the way, I had forgotten his existence; was he not killed in the melée?"

"No," replied the Feuillant, carelessly, "no; she begged his life, and that probably gave rise to the absurd report. She is full of feminine feelings, and would as soon have entreated for her dog."

"It is to be hoped that the idiot Gascon has no idea that he is so honoured," said La Mole; "it would make him insufferable! Oh! the smell of garlic and leather whenever he pears! how can she even support his sence!"

"Of course," returned Montgaillard, "idares to hope for her regard, there are plate invent sayings of hers to undeceive him; must never allow such folly, such treasor rob us of our Urania. The Queen-mother going to marry her perfumer René, and to a divinity!"

"I know it," replied La Mole, "and to you will smile to hear I am interested." then related to the monk the circumstance his fancy for Alix, and his wish to withe her from her father's protection."

"I am," said the Petit Feuillant, "performance acquainted with the damsel you allude to, do I condemn your admiration; she is low I think it will be in my power to assist you this matter, as I have at this moment some of ings with the President, relative to the pure of the Abbey of Bourgueil, in Anjou, for whe hesitates to give our convent eighteen to sand crowns. I have in consequence of indecision, allowed the negotiation to drop, can renew it at any time, if by so doing I forward the views of my friend."

"Thank you sincerely," answered La Mole.

"This looks well; we must of course prevent this René from marrying the girl for the present."

"I fancy," said Montgaillard, laughing, "he is too good a Catholic to be much distressed by delay, for I shrewdly suspect our little beauty of heresy. Mort dieu! we must put him on his guard!"

"Well," said La Mole, "this is fortunate; for if we fail otherwise, it is only to issue an accusation against her, and she is at once in my power. There needs little form of trial on such ground. We don't want her to be massacred, however; and I suppose that affair goes on still?"

"No," said the Monk: "it lasted seven days; and in Paris alone, they say, ten thousand of the locusts are got rid of; but the King is weak beyond belief, and has issued a second order that the Huguenots are to be protected."

"Folly!" said La Mole: "they will rise anew, and we shall have all the trouble over again. Coconnas tells me, he was quite weary of slaying, and his method at last was comic enough: he bought a great many as they were

"What an original conception! But we you here?—players? more arrivals from "Yes," said the Patron: "some

whom I intend to protect because the been persecuted by the Vandals of parand because I love good verses an voices."

"I rejoice at their good fortune," liftoppish priest, "inasmuch as I have a against that impertinent comedian I who came the other day before my churing his discordant tambour whilst I wering my famous discourse against gance in apparel. I had reached a moring period, namely a passage in the Re of Saint Bridget, in which she descritorments endured in the other world by for having decked her daughter, with nicety and cost, in the hope of gaining band for the damsel. I raised my voice

bosoms the St. Esprits set in diamonds, now so much worn, a fashion unmeet and sinful, unless adopted by the ministers of Holy Church - I raised my voice, I say, higher as I found the stunning sound of the buffoon's tambour continued, but the insolent varlet outnoised me, till, becoming irritated, I descended from the pulpit, and, advancing towards him, desired to know how he dared be so bold as to beat his tambour while I was preaching. The rascal threw himself into a grotesque attitude, and, coming up to me with a limping gait, waving his hand and showing his teeth, cried out, 'How dare you be so bold as to preach while I beat my tambour?' This was too much. I drew the small knife I always carry, and slashed his odious and clamorous instrument in several places, and was then retiring, when the irreverend reprobate rushed after me and forced over my head the frame of his disabled tambour, which hung round my throat like a huge ruff. I should have been the less annoyed had not this scene excited much laughter amongst my fair flock, whose eyes, I grieve to say, wandered in mirthful admiration after the handsome vagabond."

La Mole did not attempt to restrain his risibility at this account, in which the good-natured priest joined; then suddenly starting danced across the chamber, and taking lute, touched a few chords with much gracience.

"Music," said he, "is the soother of ations, the softener of all animosities. sing you a few stanzas from the 'l d'Amour' of our young poet, Du Trellon verses may vie with Ronsard's himself."

So saying, in a clear voice, and with gesticulation and ornament, he sang to a rite and then greatly admired air—

In sooth, if she I love Knows not to reprove, I love her ever!

But if my fair one's eyes

Make no fond replies,

At once I leave her.

When on her cheek I see Smiles that beam for me, I live to love her!

But if I seek in vain Gentle looks to gain, My flame is over.

Though life's uncertain span I'd cherish while I can, And banish sadness,

Yet I'd endure Love's care, So she but take her share, And think it gladness! "Charmingly sung!" exclaimed La Mole; "and a pretty thing, with spirit and gaiety. I dare say the young poet will improve. Let him take for his model the great star of the all-dazzling Pleïad. Oh! there is the rich imagery, the learned elegance, the charm that carries away the soul! What does not our language owe to our immortal Ronsard for transplanting into its meagre soil the full flowers of Greek luxuriance, and raising such incomparable riches of versification from the treasures of Greece and Rome!"

"It seems to me," said the Priest, "that you have incorrectly bestowed on him the epithet of immortal. His compositions, with the exception of a few, are too learned, too obscure for the generality of readers, who, it is true, admire and wonder at that which they do not understand, but retain only such poetry as touches their feelings; and after all, it is by the mass, by the people, in fact, that the memory of the muse is handed down to after times. If we could live a century hence, it would not surprise the to find the name of Ronsard forgotten, his poems neglected, and some new poet called immortal in his stead."

"Treason!" cried La Mole; "I will never believe it! never imagine that the splendid

uay?" said the Pries " True," answered his decline may be those accursed Huge Psalms he had trans own nasal tunes. B course, for the day to do. I must entre to the Queen-mother, these Italians. Cocon we shall find him there rine will not hesitate t she has taste, and love my dear Montgaillard! to which you are invit thing exquisite; and to my guests, and choose a the Court those who are there is no greater mistak however lovely, if they ar cloak, and the little velvet cap, ornamented with three small pointed feathers, then called 'the Anjou bonnet,' having been adopted lately by that prince. Casting a last glance on the mirror which hung to his girdle, he led the way to the Louvre, followed by his ambling confessor.

THE DISCLOS

Ay, but I must, and you n

LA MOLE and his compa apartments of the Queen-m de la Reine, where she was ceive visitors without form; were permitted to attend, fashionable Count was one of Catherine was surrounded lies, and had apparently cast that could bring unpleasant train. She listened with grapproposal of La Mole to patr agreed at once that a day she which his theatre should be court attend.

and Marguerite shall carry all her ladies, to make the pomp the greater. Look not so coldly, my son; you must learn to forget your homely Gascon habits, and indulge in our court gaiety, or you will shame our teaching."

"Madam," said Henry, with a voice which he endeavoured to render calm, "I would willingly forget much which it is my misfortune to remember."

Catherine bit her lip. "Where is Bianco?" said she hastily to one of her ladies. "Let him bring me the essence for his Grace, who has slept ill, and fares not as I could wish. He is," she continued, turning to the company, "low-spirited in consequence of the likelihood of losing his brother Anjou — I mean the King of Poland. The ambassadors are not yet arrived to bear him from us, and I trust we shall have some merry days yet before he departs. La Mole, they tell me you are about to give us a fête; pray, am I to be one of the chosen guests, for we all tremble, I assure you, lest we should any of us be excluded?"

"Your Grace," said La Mole humbly, "is too condescending to deign to inquire respecting my intentions. I would willingly beat down my walls and make a plain of my poor morsel of a garden to accommodate all those to whom

intended guests. generosity to add no name, either male or Catherine took the "You will see "looking our best, sir monarch as you are But you must coax I leave her chamber, and her there, so that we beams. Oh, René," sh " you are there? Me cupies much of your choice extremely.-Bia daughter of the Presid ed, turning to La Mc see her."

"I have no such wis Mole, combing his mo head languidly backwa ready in this presence; they are too weak to endure more light."

"I saw her," said Coconnas, waving his head also, and exhibiting his white hand, covered with rings, while he took a sweetmeat from a little jewelled box offered him by one of the Queen's ladies, — "I saw her; but she has a sullen, melancholy look. René, you must see to this; for we will patronize her when she is your wife, and we cannot admit clouds into our sky."

"Her father is to-day named Superintendent of finance and Counsellor of state," said Catherine; "so you will have a more exalted bride, René: we must make your dower worthy of her. Let her be at our new pastime to-morrow; and bid her, above all, be gay."

"Madonna," said René humbly, with a voice of deep servility such as he was accustomed to use when he addressed the Queen in public, "overwhelms her slave with goodness. Alix will leap for joy at the news I shall carry her. The shadow which obscures her beauty, and which is but the mask of modesty, will disappear, and your grace will see her at the Italian play as fair as sunny day without a cloud,"

The promise extorted distraction appeared in to her mind: it was tr sought to intrude upo dared to present himse knew that her father n their friendship was a ever, and she felt sur taken place in his int watched her as a wild a to spring upon it, should

Then Claude's roma avowal, her own tacit passion which she felt, I session of her mind; all force, and she trembled of the step she meditated

The President was late, of the unworthines in-law; but the toils we endeavoured to blind himself to the real character of the man to whom his only child was destined.

He represented to Alix the certain destruction which must ensue if she retracted her promise; and urged her, by every argument he could call forth, not to sacrifice herself and her father to an aversion without foundation.

"He saved our lives," said Bailly, "from the infuriated populace; surely we owe him some gratitude for that service."

"Say not so, my father," said Alix, shuddering; "say not that he saved us: it was he who led them hither; he who excited their fury, and drove them to seek for slaughter. His hands are red with the blood of the innocent; and must 1 be given up to such a monster!"

"Alix," replied the President, "he acted but as many were obliged to do, in defence of liberty and life. A fearful and treasonous plot had been discovered against the King; and had it not been providentially made known, we had been massacred without mercy by the bloodthirsty Huguenots, whom to exterminate is to render service to Heaven, as well as to secure the sacred life of Charles."

"Father !" said Alix, solemnly, "you know

child of mine advocate treason?"

"No, father," excla hear the truth. The King were neither t were pious Christians, fiding; and they were and cruel policy,-but i in the capital of this have been found butche humanity starts back as France the people have elty and oppression. M arms; many of our go there were within their executioners. Nay, ev have refused to obey "We are," they said, "n murderers of innocent me

in a resolute tone, "and you must hear me,—bear, too, a secret which I have cherished from my infancy, and which I had never dared reveal, but that I feel the time is come to suffer and endure. I am a Protestant!"

The President uttered a shriek, and fell back in his seat, covering his face with his clenched hands.

"Girl!" he exclaimed, "pronounce not your own doom! Unsay the dreadful word, and let me look on you again without the certainty that your days are numbered."

"It is too late," replied Alix; "childish weakness has hitherto caused me to commit the sin of concealment, and I but disclose a secret which will, I trust, be the means of my deliverance. At the altar, if I must appear there, in the face of all the foes of my religion will I proclaim the truth, and claim the punishment they delight to accord. But fear not, my dear father; you shall be safe, your treasured life shall not be compromised. I will protest your innocence, your ignorance of my crime, and offer myself as the sole victim. I shall perish; but escape a fate far worse than lingering death in torments, that of becoming the wife of the felon Bianco."

Bailly exhausted himself in arguments and

entreaties to dissuade his daughter from her resolve, but in vain; persuasions, threats, all were useless: till at length, seeing that he was equally resolved with herself not to abandon his project, she began to fear that he would use measures to prevent her from acting as she intended, and thought it more prudent to consent to remain passive in the business for the present, as he agreed to do in respect of the marriage.

"Let us," said Bailly, "afford no room for suspicion of your real feelings; I will take can that René does not annoy you, but you must consent outwardly to endure his presence. This I command, and I tell you, Alix, in this I will be obeyed for my own sake; as, with his power and favour with the Queen, just at this junctum to offend him would be madness."

Alix, with tears, begged her father to believe that she would act in every way so as to avoid causing danger to him; and Bailly, though deep ly distressed at the discovery of her heretical opinions, yet hoped that she might be diverte from her meditated act of desperation, when time had in some degree softened the poignance of her affliction.

He had scarcely left her, when, on descending to his apartment, he found the object of their conversation, and of the detestation of his daughter; and found also that he owed to him his elevation to the new posts which Catherine had obtained. Confused and distressed, Bailly scarcely knew what course to pursue, and could only throw himself upon the generosity of the Italian, explaining to him that the agitation into which Alix had been thrown, had so disordered her nerves that he could not hope to name an early day for the marriage, but would do all in his power to bring it about as speedily as possible.

He received the command for his daughter to appear at the Italian Theatre with trembling, for he anticipated opposition on her part; and it was with great anxiety that he returned, when René had departed, to tell her of the unwelcome honour, and urge the necessity of compliance. He found her subdued and worn out; and on his assuring her that he would not quit her side during the evening, and would engage Bianco so as to prevent his approaching her, he gained her unwilling consent, and she resolved to endure this new trial with all the firmness of which she was capable.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOCHELLOIS REMONSTRANCE.

You have beguiled us with a counterfeit Resembling majesty. You are forsworn—forsworn Kine Jos

ALTHOUGH Queen Catherine assumed as pearance of careless indifference, and rene all the brilliant entertainments to which late horrible events had put a stop,-though was more than usually pleasing and fami condescending and full of gaiety,-in her a soul she was as much the prey of doubt, certainty, and dread, as her vacillating weak son Charles the Ninth. From every of the kingdom remonstrances came pouris against the orders issued: all the well-disp Catholics in the country heard, as Alix declared to her father, with horror and affi the murderous commands: and if some had sufficient courage to resist them, and, over ered by the arrival of a horde of ruffian whom the execution of the deed was consis

allowed their fellow subjects to be butchered, yet others, to their eternal honour, refused to act, and sent back bold denials. Of course, in the Protestant towns great resistance was expected, and valiantly had they stood against their assailants. The strong town of La Rochelle, in chief, hurled defiance at those who attempted to invade their rights. Catholic and Protestant alike were firm; and a long and fearful struggle was in perspective before the inhabitants could be deceived into concession, or forced into obedience.

Foreign powers also heard with horror of the deed, and sent word by their ambassadors of their disapproval of the measure; and the Queenmother and her son found themselves the objects of detestation and dislike throughout Europe. The King began to fear that the nomination of his brother to the throne of Poland was far from assured, as the news of the massacre arriving might materially alter the former intentions of that people; and, after all, his hated rival might still be left to torture him with his presence and superior talent.

Letters had been dispatched to all the Courts, at first accusing the house of Guise of the troubles; then others, avowing the real authors, and proclaiming the treason of the justly punished Protestants: these contradictory accounts had failed to satisfy any of the powers, or of the resisting towns, and replies both perplexing and vexatious were daily received.

Amongst others, the answer of the honest and simple-hearted, but bold and resolute Rochellois is worthy to be read, and is one of the best specimens of those of which Charles was obliged to endure the hearing, and writhe under the infliction in vain. It ran thus:

"We, the gentlemen, captains, townsmen, and others of the town of La Rochelle, reply to the commands which have been given us in the name of his Majesty, that we cannot recognise the orders sent, which we are desired to make public, in consequence of the contradiction contained in them of his Majesty's own letters to ourselves of the 22nd and 24th of August, signed by him, and published by us; in which he throws the whole blame of the late transaction, and the cruel execution made at Paris, on the house of Guise; attesting that he was himself in great danger in his château of the Louvre, together with his people, and was forced to surround himself with guards for safety. And we can never be persuaded that so cowardly an enterprise, and so barbarous an act, could have entered into the King's mind to

conceive; much less that it should have taken place by his express command, as the paper sent to us declares. Nor can we imagine that he has been so ill-advised as to cut off, as it were, his own right arm, and pollute the nuptials of the royal lady his sister, with the spilling of noble and innocent blood, and defame by such a deed the whole French nation and the royal name, which throughout the world have hitherto enjoyed the reputation of honour, truth, and courtesy; nor that he can have furnished a subject to historians to write a tragic history, such as has no parallel in antiquity, and of which posterity can never hear without horror-even this, which was conceived in Rome and brought forth in Paris.

"Neither will we credit that out of the mouth of our King can issue hot and cold, black and white; one day saying one thing, the next unsaying it, which must be the case if the paper sent to us were correct: for there he is made to row that he will keep the edict of peace inviolate, even while violating it at the instant, in declaring that this massacre was committed by his orders, contrary to his former assertion and professed regret at the catastrophe.

"And on this quarrel we, the said gentlemen, captains, and others, are ready to combat man

blood. We judge by all the enorm tised, and still acted, in the city of elsewhere,—by the murders commit many lords, gentlemen, and citizens men, women, and children,—and on number of young students, (the pid God, of kingdoms and republics to comby all the barbarity and inhumanity that his Majesty is constrained and the Guisards, who have long attentions of his the populace of Paris has gained the action of the constrained and the populace of Paris has gained the action of the constrained and the populace of Paris has gained the action of the constrained and the constrained and the populace of Paris has gained the action of the constrained and the constraine

"As for what is advanced, accusing ral and the Protestants of conspirthe state, the probability is as little justice is great in those who execut bring to trial afterwards.

"Of this it is useless to speak; it of the Romish religion in whom

ers of that peace which the King in his wisdom had granted to this poor kingdom, and the blessings of which all had begun to feel and bless, save those enemies to the public and the nation, the turbulent and bloodthirsty Guisards.

"To conclude: when his Majesty is out of their power, and can act according to his own will, we will obey him in all things according as our consciences, which are directed by God alone, are not wounded; but if it be otherwise, we are ready to quit earth for heaven, — our worldly habitations for a heavenly sojourn.

"At present, the duty we owe to the King, to our wives and children, and our fellow citizens, commands us to hold ourselves on our guard, and not place ourselves at the mercy of those who have received the same bloody commission from the Guisards in the forged name of his Majesty; whose subjects, by the hands of accursed foreigners, were massacred beneath his very robe and the shadow of his wing, without his having power to help them:—how, then, should he help us, who are at a distance?

"We, therefore, arm ourselves for resistance, in defence of our lives, and the privilege granted to us by our King, until he shall be in a state to defend himself against his enemies and ours."

yet he took no measures beyond his fect order to prevent it. Bewildere rage, remorse, jealousy, and fear, his in a frightful chaos of excitement, a scarcely conscious of his actions. state it would not appear very natural should hear of feasts and gaieties with but, casting himself from one e another, he hailed with delight the mother's invitation to the Italians' instantly set about giving orders that rary theatre should be got ready for the hall of the Jeu de Paume, supthe arrangements himself, and direct decorations to be provided.

Catherine saw with pleasure the this incident had given to his tho resolved to improve it to the utmost ting his hatred of both her and his the new amusement he anticipated, rred in the prosecution of their cruelties; his friend the boatman had related the cirstance of Montgomery's escape by swimg over the river, as well as the interference his favour of a page of the King's. His lance was not to be baffled, and he soon overed that there was something mystericonnected with the new attendant on the se, which his sagacity suggested might conclude. As soon as his suspicions were sed he resolved to satisfy them, and omit no ortunity of ascertaining if they were well need.

le communicated to the Queen-mother the of Montgomery's escape, which greatly insed her, as she had pleased her imagination the hope of having him in her power.

Your measures were not well taken, René," she. "What do you tell me of all your ads in Paris, of your troop of newly-arrived lians who have done such execution, if they we the chief object of my hatred to elude m? Would I had employed Ruggieri!"

The countenance of René became so livid h passion as she said this, that Catherine ented of having done so, and added soothly: "Forgive me, my good friend; I am unjust: but you know not what it is to be foiled in such a point, and I had reckoned on your superior skill."

"I know well, madonna, what it is," replied René, recovering himself; "I have myself been foiled, and by an accursed Huguenot, one too who dares to be my rival, and who finds protection under this very roof."

"How, René?" returned Catherine, anxious to do away with the effect of her former remarks: "name what I can do for you, and is shall be done."

"The King's nurse," replied he, "has a new attendant, who appeared only on the night of St. Bartholomew. He is kept secretly in her chamber, and securely guarded. He descends not with the other pages, nor is he ever seen about the palace. It was this man who sided the escape of Montgomery, and assaulted my friend, who would have dispatched him. This is the person whom I demand; but I presume he is protected by the King, whom heart is strangely tender towards these Hugornots."

"Bianco," said the Queen, "this is my buiness as well as yours. I will demand of my son who this man is; and before long depend on hearing news of him. The King and his

rty are preparing to go to a feast given by antouillet, the Prévôt of Paris. He meditates me punishment for his lukewarmness in the te affair; but he avoids informing me of the uticulars. I fear his imprudence; and, as it better at this juncture that the citizens should a conciliated, obtain for me what knowledge ou can on the subject, that, if need be, I may ounteract the effect of his madness."

"Then," said René, "it will be well that our Grace's guards be on the alert; for the ling will, I know, commit some strange outreak. He has engaged a troop of determined ien to execute his bidding, but what it is he as not communicated."

"It is well," said the Queen: "take you harge, therefore, and guide some of my guards of the place, that in case of accidents they may be ready. For this service, my dear René, receive my thanks and this purse, and forget my folish words of anger: they meant nothing."

"I am satisfied, madonna," replied René; adding mentally, with a sneer, "and will try to execute your commissions as well as if Ruggieri imself undertook them."

Though Catherine did not hear this remark, the judged by the Italian's face that he had not forgiven her reproach, and she repented

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having increased his entity against her now favourite: but it was too late; and from the moment Cosmo was marked as another vicina to the fierce jealousy of the Florentine, her worthy countryman.



CHAPTER VII.

THE THEATRE OF GANASSO.

Come ho! and wake Diana with a hymn; With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear, And draw her home with music.

SHAKSPEARE.

LA MOLE, in consequence of the words admed to René by the Queen-mother, had idenly conceived a plan which, through the edium of Ruggieri and the Petit Feuillant, he bted not would answer all his wishes. This nothing less than to carry off Alix during confusion of returning from the Theatre of Passo. At this period nothing was more mon than such enterprises; and continual, shough ineffectual, complaints were made by thers and husbands from whom those dear to han had been taken by force by men of rank. seldom did they obtain redress, that it came necessary for them to take the law to their own hands; from which proceeding resulted frequent attacks and murders in the streets, creating constant confusion and interruption to the peaceable citizens.

La Mole arranged with Cosmo, who read undertook the task, that he should join the Pasident's party, and engage the attention of anco: that some persons, placed for the pose, should excite a sudden tumult, and Albe separated from her father; when a stategem should be used, and the Petit Feel lant, having induced her to accompany his should conduct her to a secure retreat with the walls of the Abbey of St. Germain des Pasides where he at present resided, and where six asylums were not unfrequently afforded to the favourites of the monks or of the noblemen connected with them.

The morning of that day in which he proposed to take possession of Alix in this mary way, was to be dedicated to the catalinement which the young Queen of Navarahad promised to adorn with her presence, at they were then to adjourn to the Italian representation: nothing could therefore be made satisfactory than the whole plan, and the case less and accomplished courtier felt as if he had performed a deed worthy of commendation in having thus provided excitement for himself in some time to come. His beautiful country

house and gardens, situated a little distance without Paris on the river, were to be the scene of the fête champêtre, which was to surpass in grace and refinement the coarse glories, as he termed them, of the gorgeous Louvre, and teach the vulgar-minded lovers of pleasure how much their enjoyments can be enhanced by taste.

His house was built on the model of a Venetian villa, and resembled those beautiful constructions, still to be seen occasionally in France, which the times of Francis I. and his successors have left, before the purity of that syle was deformed by innovation. The facade was adorned with delicate tracery, and rows of small pointed arcades stretched along its extent. Its halls were of white marble; their sole adornments statues, presenting the most beautiful forms - everything severe or harsh being carefully excluded, as unfit for a dwelling dedicated entirely to enjoyment. In its saloons were found precious works of art, all perfect in their kind, and few in number: each object was precious rather from its beauty, and the exquisite delicacy of its workmanship and construction, than from its mere richness. A mirror of the largest size yet introduced into France was among the treasures from the hand

Sized main America, of a व्याच्ये व्याची rins of which object, which is precised of art of mei-creati passe which wi point of a diam prosentation of t with producing at linney little less th The adamments fined to the exqui article on the table of enamel, chiefly and spoons of gold ere, fortunately for their fame, of a less per-

The fine lawns of the garden, sloping down the river, were left in their native beauty: to festoons of flowers, no extrinsic ornament was attroduced; and only one device appeared, and hat was predominant,—a silver moon, surmounting a host of stars, glittered over a sylvan avilion, on which were inscribed the words Vince Luna!" The allusion was not lost upon the gratified Marguerite, whose vanity was reatly pleased by the evident homage offered ther shrine by the most accomplished and andsome cavalier of the day.

Ronsard was the only poet admitted; as La Mole rightly judged that by this means the harmony would certainly not be disturbed by the jealousy of rivals contending for supremacy.

After the repast, as the guests strayed along the alleys of flowers and through the groves, a concealed concert of flutes and other soft instruments announced the arrival of a gilded bark, com which issued sixteen ladies, clad in the ifferent costumes of the various provinces of rance, who each in turn executed a dance couliar to her country, accompanied by the usic adapted to it. The fair Poitevine danced

dessus de violon, the Bretones de rapid and spirite branles gaies.

Nymphs and s formed a ballet the Princess hers tertainments, whe that the hours we drew up beneath whole gay party by two large gilde lodious guidance ries; from whence ed to the theatre, policy, the public though at first the cate it entirely to t This arrangement La Mal

enience. A temporary gallery answered the urpose of boxes, and the pit was resigned to he general audience. The Queen-mother sat surrounded by her "dames de la petite bande," as the beauties were called over whom she loved to preside; the young King of Navarre was near her, and busily engaged in earnest conversation with the artful and fascinating Madame de Sauves, who appeared to absorb all his attention, and was using all her efforts to confirm the effect her beauty had evidently produced on his too pliant mind. The Duke of Alencon, his friend, stood at a distance with a gloomy dissatisfied air, to which jealousy lent an additional shade; for he saw with vexation that the fair coquette, whom he also admired, had no smiles that evening to bestow on any but the young Béarnais.

Charles IX. was in great and excited spirits, and talked incessantly; all his natural vivacity and gaiety appearing in full vigour, without apparently a cloud to disturb the sunshine of his pleasure. The Duke of Anjou, or, as he should rather be now called, the King of Poland elect, was in the train of his sister Marguerite, attached to the seat of the Princess de Condé, as if he had there taken root: his whole soul beamed in his eyes as he spoke to

her in a low, passionate tone; and she listent with a countenance which too well told husband, who gloomily regarded the pair, he much she felt, and with what delight she deals in those honeyed words, so dangerous and a But Condé's thoughts were far away he was brooding over the misery of his Protestant friends, and dreaming of the possibility of affording them relief. His lovely wife wife nothing to him, and her affections he neith sought nor regarded. He classed her with the rest of the coquettes at a court which considered as profligate as it was cruel and in only desire was to escape from the thraden a marriage he detested. Had he heard words uttered by Henry of Anjou, he would have thought the time of his emancipation far distant.

"Beloved Marie!" whispered the royal love.

"of what use is this reserve. I know, I feel that I am dear to you; although your love due not, I fear, approach by a thousand degrees the adoration with which my heart glows for year. Tell me not that there is sin or shame in said love as mine: your happiness, your honour is all my care. This fatal marriage can be do solved. I have an inward conviction that

ower in France will ere long be unlimited; hen, Marie, what shall prevent your being nine? — what shall oppose our happiness? Only let me hear from your own lips that you will hail the accomplishment of this wish as warmly as I shall."

"Henry," whispered the young Princess, "I natreat you, urge me not. I have confessed far no much. I have told Marguerite too much, for she has repeated my imprudent regrets to rou. It was not well done, for I would fain have had you depart to this desolate kingdom without bearing with you the knowledge of that which can give no joy to either you or me. Deceive not yourself: we are separated fatally! Alas! you must go; and what can be my fate but to die here, a neglected, wretched creature, lost to every joy on earth, and seeing nothing in the future but despair!"

"Marie," returned the Prince, "I will give up this hateful crown of Poland. I will go to my tyrant brother and tell him, no power shall force me to abandon France. I will brave Condé to his face, and make him do me justice, and give you up. —I will —"

"Hold! Henry; dearest Henry!" cried the rrified Marie: "think of my danger, my dis-

grace; and, if you really love me, be calm, at act not in a manner which would ruin us ever."

"Then," said he, "give me your promise I swear, nothing but that will prevent me is doing some desperate act; nothing but that a save my life and reason. Promise to live me alone; never to be another's; to comby yourself my wife, my own, before the face Heaven! and, when I come to claim you, ready to redeem your pledge. Nothing a prevent this. I will endure all that Fate impose upon me,—absence, misery, disappole ment,—so you are my reward at last,—so I secure that your heart and soul are mine."

"They are — they are yours only," self-side Marie, overcome with his vehemence. "I not loved but you: no other can I ever love. Cont demands nothing of me: he hates me for the part my friends have taken. I was forced that him, and I cannot injure him by this present Take it then, my beloved; in life and deather am yours alone!"

They started: the same sound they had the heard before in similar circumstances section whispering near them, and the last words the had uttered were repeated in a hollow eclars in death alone!"

Renée de Chateauneuf, brilliant in beauty and radiant in dress, marked the interview of the lovers, and looked on with envy and depite. "I have then lost him," said she; "he as broken my chains: but he shall not wear mose of another so easily as he imagines. The flueen-mother shall know of this, and judge if flarie de Cleves is a fitting person for her son." he beckoned to her side René Bianco, and men ensued a long conversation between them, all of import. When the Italian took leave of er, he sought the Queen-mother; and long and serious was the conference between them, he nature of which future events too well explained.

Marguerite of Navarre saw in what manner her husband's attention was engaged, and a teckless feeling of despair took possession of her mind.

"He loves me not: he never will love the wife whom he led to the altar amidst the carnage of his friends. My sight is odious to him!" she exclaimed mentally; "but oh, God! I thought him incapable of loving at all; and I forgave the harshness and coldness of his nature! What now do I see? He is pouring out his heart at the feet of a woman, worthless and bandoned; a wretch without feeling but of

vanity, without sentiment but of interest; many of the sentiment of interest; many of the sentiment of the s

While these thoughts passed in the mind of Marguerite, no outward signs told of their existence: she appeared to be listening to the flattery of the handsome La Mole, who, seated at her feet, uttered all that the overstraine gallantry of the day allowed, and ventured far as prudence could permit to exhibit the vai feeling which he called love in his words an looks. The smiles and sparkling glances of the Princess, - her quick replies, - her animate laughter, - her sudden changes from gay to grave,-and all the efforts she was making to conceal what passed in her mind, deceived the courtier into a conviction that he was hear with pleasure, and he triumphed in idea over the rest of the crowd of adorers on whom the Princess deigned not to waste a thought.

"Ah! your Grace," sighed the beautiful Madame de Sauves to Henry of Navarre, "how can you try to deceive me with such vows, — you who are the husband of the most admired Princess in Europe,—one for whom all our gallants are dying!"

"She cannot compare with you," said Henry.
"Besides, what is Marguerite to me? We are
equally indifferent to each other, and neither of
us are of a jealous turn."

"I would not believe that of any but the Queen," replied De Sauves tenderly: "but all the world knows of an attachment she had before she saw your Grace; therefore, perhaps, she may be indeed indifferent on your account."

"I have never inquired about the state of her heart," said Henry carelessly: "it is of yours I ask now."

"Oh! the Duke de Guise, you know well enough, is her acknowledged lover; though now, of course, he must marry the Princess de Portian. D'Entragues' reign did not last long—poor fellow! I am obliged to smile on him myself, lest he should break his heart."

"Is she indeed such a coquette?" asked Henry with a slight frown.

De Sauves laughed. "This is too simple," she replied; "why, we all know her coquetry,

ingly romantic Endymion: I quite Arcadian. Henry listene after history, wh the disadvantage witty, and natur peared no evil in She mixed with th beauties of the Co in riveting the chi perienced Prince, v self, felt flattered to a woman so well acc so fascinating, as his first time since his m peared to recover the awoke to the danger most designing sirens was compelled to live. taken in her, I thought she had a heart; t, at all events, it is not for me. Her expers saved my life; but that was mere humity. She is no better than the rest; besides, the is the daughter of Catherine!"

A shudder passed over him as he thought is; and he turned again to the lively De week, to lose the recollections which were eginning to banish his temporary gaiety.

The Florentines acquitted themselves in a manner to deserve the applause which was howered upon them .- Hitherto the drama in France had been confined principally to the reresentation of mysteries, scenes got up with great solemnity in honour of the entry of royal personages into the city of Paris. The Conteres de la Passion had quitted by degrees their ancient subjects, drawn from sacred history, and had presented to the public scenes of The troop called Enfans meient romance. sans souci, presided by a master called Le Prince des Sots, had become celebrated by their performances of Huon de Bourdeaux; which, however much it seems to have delighted the Parisian audience, must have been, if not a dull, certainly rather a lengthy entertainment, as it appears to have taken some months* in acting,

^{*} In Brittany at the present day similar plays are acted.

coming upon of parliament, sho paying their det butions imposed butions imposed expenses of the expenses of the these circumstant proceed, and in chevé, much to audience on who tediousness.

Jean de Pontal
the Hôtel de Bour
established; and
actor and author o
wit and humour re
in his line; but the
Saint Eustache wit
brethren, and perse
sible means, calling
Sathan.

taste for theatricals gained ground daily in the capital. Even in the Halles of Paris temporary theatres were erected, and plays exhibited to the common people. Those of the students were, however, so free upon the vices of the Court and the abuse of the Government, that a more refined and agreeable style was called for; and the fashionable part of the gentry, imitating the manners of their superiors, hailed the appearance of the Italians as a promise of a more elegant amusement, which should offend no delicacy, and censure no fashionable irregularities.

"These actors shall have a theatre of their own immediately," said the King. "What a fortunate chance that their petition reached us, otherwise we might have lost the most delightful recreation in the world through the stupidity of my wise parliament, who are all such dolts that their souls cannot comprehend what is worthy. Listen to the voice of that Italian. Mort Dieu! it is ravishing: he shall be paid with a purse of gold as soon as the scene is over. How this exalts the mind and soothes the feelings! all care is soon forgotten in these sounds."

During the whole of the performance Alix sat in passive endurance by her father's side, taking no interest in what was going on; her The simil makes of the state of the state of the state of the state of the simil makes of the state of the st

min exercial every art in strings her to regard
tion with it least at appearance of interest,
like leastly, which has less attracted him, has
now less influence than before. He saw that
he was influence than before, the saw that
he was influence that he with dislike from the
heritating of their acquaintance; but he was
now quite aware that he was detested and
feared, and by every feeling of mortified selflove which he experienced he vowed to effect or
revenge deep and tyrannous. He felt she was
in his power; for her father had yielded to his
avarice and ambition, and was won to his purpose. His powerful patroness seconded his
own wishes; and the unhappy girl herself was

entirely helpless, and without a friend to rescue her from his machinations.

Finding that all his efforts were unavailing to make Alix put on a semblance which should deceive the world, René affected to be forced from her side by the necessity of attending to the Queen; but as he passed to and fro, near or at a distance, Alix felt the chill of his serpent eyes upon her as she sat speechless and immoveable, fascinated by the spell they seemed to cast over her.

It was the mode at this period for the audience in the pit to amuse themselves, before the performance began, and between the acts,a space somewhat long,-with games of dice and cards, songs and conversation; nor did they forget to season their diversion with refreshment of various kinds. Dried sweetmeats and comhits were thrown about in profusion, and were also cast up, and returned to and from, the elevated and separated seats occupied by the superior class of visitors. Into the boxes of the Queen-mother, and the Queen of Navarre, were showered numerous missives of this nature, enclosed in which were lines of a complimentary nature: though it sometimes happened that severe satire and bitter censure were concealed in these apparently friendly greetings.

Blushes and smiles generally follow opening of these mysterious presents; as culations and guesses were made as to t bable author and sender, which occasione mirth and coquettish remark. In one m found a stanza to this purpose:

> Though richly shrined thy beauties seem In gems that worldlings prize, I cannot see thy diamonds gleam, So dazzling are thine eyes.

In another:

Come no more where I may view thee. Lest thy glances quite undo me,-Or remain, and let me gaze Till I perish in their blaze.

Amongst a shower which reached the the Queen of Navarre, she opened one c ing this compliment, in allusion to one titles given her by her admirers of "La]

> Wherefore prize we sunny Day, If he chase the Moon away? Surely daylight comes too soon, Banishing the lovely Moon!

A sweet and clear voice was hear amongst the crowd below to sing bener box of the fair Marguerite a wild stra words of which were as follow:

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

I'd seek thee, and find thee, and call thee my own, Although thou wert hidden in regions unknown,

Where never the sun-light
Thy home might betray,
But the glow-worm each summer night
Lends thee thy day,—
Where sometimes the gossamer,
Passing thee by,
Waves her frail pennon
Along the blue sky,—

But where not the smallest bird Ventures to hover,

And not e'en the moth can Thy dwelling discover;

Yet there, though so secret, so still, so alone, I'd seek thee, sweet fairy, and make thee my own!

The Queen-mother opened one of the sugared secrets thrown to her by an unknown hand, and a shade passed over her countenance as she read:

TRES Erebi FURIAS ne posthae credite vates,
Addita nam QUARTA est nunc Catherina TRIBUS;
Quod si TRES FURIAS à se dimitteret Orcus,
Hæc Catherina foret, pro TRIBUS UNA satis.

The Count de Retz, who observed the expression of his mistress's face, laid his hand on his sword, and exclaimed,

"Madam, your Grace is insulted! — let me seek out the traitor!"

"No, no, De Retz," answered the Queen, re-

covering herself instantly. "We shall do what we please; let them say what they please. The praise or blame of the million is of little consequence. One is their idol one day, and their demon the next. Those who are moved by their breath are but light and vain: for myself, I regard it not."

As she spoke, another missive reached her, which it required some philosophy to peruse without considerable vexation:

* The difference would you have me tell
'Twixt Catherine and Jezebel,—
The one for Israel's ruin sent,
The other France's punishment:
The first was fraught with every evil,
The last yields only to the devil.
On Jezebel Heaven's wrath was driven,
And to the dogs her carcase given:
As dark a fate just Heaven may send—
But there the parallel must end;
From Catherine's infected clay
The famish'd dogs would turn away!

Catherine tore the paper into fragments, and turned her eyes towards the stage, for at this moment the act re-commenced; and, though nothing outwardly told the torture of her hear, within was burning an unceasing fire. She felt that she had done a deed which had for ever

^{*} Published at the time.

sealed her fate with the people of France, that she was hated, abhorred, and loaded with the curses of all the best portion of the subjects of her son.

At length, amidst applause and great apparent delight, the play was ended, and the audience began to disperse. René was standing close to the Queen-mother, and was just about to quit her to seek the President's party, when Ruggieri whispered something to Catherine, which caused her to make some inquiries of both; and René was obliged uneasily to remain in attendance. Meantime Alix, anxious to escape his attentions, urged her father to hasten their departure. The people pressed forward to behold the exit of the royal party; and several men coming suddenly from the pit as Bailly, with his daughter on his arm, was advancing, rudely pushed against them, and they were separated in a moment. Alix was borne along by the crowd till she reached the street, and the President struggled in vain to rejoin her. A friendly voice addressed him, exclaiming,

"This way, sir: the young lady is in perfect safety. This way: shall I lead you to her?"

He instantly followed the speaker, who led him to a side-door, while Alix, much alarmed, was calling to him in the crowd; but her voice was drowned by the shouts of a party near her, and the rush and confusion of the people striving to get forward.

"What shall I do!" cried she. "Will moone afford me their protection for a few moments?"

At her exclamation a person stepped towards her, and in a mild voice entreated her to be calm.

"Is it possible," said he, with surprise, "that I behold the daughter of the President Bailly? I came to seek you; for I saw him but now asking if you had been seen."

Alix looked up, and, though she did not recognise the person who spoke, she observed that he wore a clerical habit, though of somewhat singular fashion. His countenance was full of benevolent anxiety, and the tone of his voice was encouraging and soft.

"Delay not, dear madam," he said. "The President will be most uneasy till you are restored to him." Without the slightest hesitation Alix presented him her hand. "Follow me, madam," hurriedly exclaimed her protector. "The royal entrance is safe from interruption, and I have fortunately the power of passing you that way."

The Petit Feuillant, for her zealous cavalier

no other, led her on through an opposite ige, and in a few minutes they were in the air; but scarcely did she feel the breeze her fainting spirits before she was forcibly d and hurried onwards, while a veil tightly n over her head prevented her attempt to cries from being of any avail. She felt she was lifted into some vehicle, and was a along by horses at full speed, but whither ould not conjecture.

Mad him who may have y-

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE KINGS.

And the three Kings with all their companie.

Ship of Fooles.

THE Prévôt Nantouillet having in vain endeavoured, with as good a grace as possible to excuse himself from the visit of the three Kings, who proposed to honour his hotel with their presence, was obliged at length to make preparations for their reception.

While he was in the midst of occupations which would have caused him no little prides few weeks previously, it was announced to him that a party of the young clerks of the Chamber des Comptes, amongst whom was a relation of his own, desired to pay their respects to him.

"They come," said Nantouillet, "at an inconvenient moment; but, however, I cannot refuse them: let them enter."

Accordingly the party appeared, and greeted him with vociferous exclamations of friendship; congratulating him on the honour that he was

about to attain, and entreating that they might be allowed some corner from whence to see the sight. They professed that their conduct should be so orderly and proper that no one should even discover that they were on the spot; and, if the Prévôt pleased, they would act as attendants, to do honour to the occasion. At first Nantouillet laughed at their importunities; but at length it was settled that about ten of the oldest of the clerks should appear on the evening in question, and act as a guard of honour in the halls where the festivities were to take place, when they would have an opportunity of beholding all the royal and noble guests to their infinite satisfaction.

"So be it, then," said he, good-humouredly; "it is something to have so many crowned heads under one's roof.—Why, Philippe, you are yourself King of the Bazoche this year."

"No, uncle," answered the young man; "I am only ex-king: we have elected a capital fellow, he and the Emperor of Galilee are to have a feast the same night as yours; perhaps you would like them to look in on your revels?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Nantouillet, "it would be far from my wish; everything in my house must be conducted with order,—no riots,

—no noisy reveling,—all dignified and graceful. You will see, my young friends, a little of Court manners that night, and I trust you will study them; for you of the city are too at to be boisterous in your merriment, and riotes in your frolics. I will show you what the mirth and hilarity of gentlemen is."

"We are but clerks," said Philippe; "but we contrive to amuse ourselves just as well However, we will mend our manners, and the pattern by the Court gallants, whom you much admire."

"Well said, my good boys," returned the Prévôt. "Now go to Marion, and see that treats you well, and fail not to come at appointed time. I will have dresses suitable for you; and, please the Virgin! we shall have a brave night of it."

Highly gratified with this permission, the young men parted from their indulgent friend, and returned to their companions, to when they made known their good fortune, much the envy of those who were not to be of the party; the good cheer they were sure to and at the Prévôt's not being amongst the least the tractive circumstances named. A great deliver was said amongst them which led to a variety

of conclusions, the result of which afterwards appeared.

At last, the evening, looked for with so many different emotions, arrived, and the Hôtel d'Hercule was prepared in all its splendour for the great occasion; which though its giver dreaded, yet it was not without a certain agreeable feeling of pride that he beheld the gorgeousness of his dwelling; and he tried to banish all unpleasant recollections, that he might do proper honour to his guests, in spite of presentiments which were, he reflected, after all, probably vain imaginings.

"These courtiers," said he, "are proud and arogant; but still they would not be likely to bijure me in the main. King Charles is vinferive; but what have I done to incur his arger? The King of Poland I am not so sure of he owes me a grudge for refusing his mistress for a wife. La Belle Chateauneuf is a lovely creature; but—but—not in my way by any means. I wonder why Henry of Anjou wants to get rid of her?—it can be only a feint; but I am not such a fool as to make myself a convenient husband to any of these fine gallants. As for Navarre, poor fellow! there is no harm in him; he hasn't much spirit

Satisfying his mind thus, he but full of importance, and reviewed I tions with extreme complacency; of in the most approved manner, and that nothing was wanting to render as perfect as possible.

The large outer court of the housed by torches of white and colour ported by gilded figures surrounding space. In the centre of the built magnificent double flight of steps of ble, which projected far into the conducted to the grand entrance, were adorned with shrubs and flow fusion, and birds of gaudy plumage in golden cages amongst them. Convere hung from every balcony and with draperies of rich tapestry were held rical figures above every portal, who beauty of architecture needed no

the hall ran arcades of Saracenic form supporting an open gallery which blazed with light, and where musicians were placed ready to welcome the royal party, and to perform during the repast. From this hall opened immense doors, displaying a suite of chambers richly decorated, and containing treasures of art and taste, rare mirrors, precious enamels, splendid cabinets, and pictures, whose value was enormous.

There were two large recesses at the upper end of the great hall, in which was displayed the great wealth of Nantouillet, and that portion of his possessions of which he was most peculiarly vain. This was a huge mass of gold and silver plate—cups, vases, urns, dishes, candelabra, salt-cellars, and vessels without number, all of value scarcely to be imagined, as most of them were the work of Cellini and his pupils, and had been collected at an enormous charge by the father of the Prévôt and himself.

The tables where the repast was to be served were ranged along the inner hall, and blazed with plate of equal richness to that on the buffets: the boards were covered with cloths called tabliers ouvrés, adorned with open work, of great rarity, of oriental patterns, fabricated

at Troyes. The hanap, a covered cup, used at this period, and for several centuries previous, holding choice wine, spiced, was placed in the centre of the principal table. The enamelled gold, of which it was made, was of the pures description, and its execution was the work of the celebrated Jean Courtois of Limoges.

Servants in glittering liveries lined the passages, and stood at the foot of the stairs which led to the galleries round, from whence open other chambers, all fitted up with great spandour. Nothing in short that money could cure was neglected, and much did the assemblieriends of Nantouillet laud the appearance all. These friends consisted only of two dignitaries and their ladies; the number was small, as the principal guests were those expended to accompany the King.

The young clerks were habited as pages, white dresses, and took their station near entrance of the great hall.

As soon as the royal party was seen proaching, the musicians began their performances, and trumpets and clarions announced arrival of King Charles, the King of Poland the King of Navarre, with about two noblemen and gentlemen of their train, agreat many of the guards of each, who remains

in a lower hall, where they were to be entertained in a suitable manner.

The ladies who accompanied the royal visitors were three in number only: these were all women celebrated at the time both for their beauty and the irregularity of their lives. The first was Renée de Rieux, called La Belle Chateauneuf, whose chains the King of Poland elect had worn, though he was now desirous of shaking them off, and his design in bringing her to the house of the rich Prévôt was twofold, first to dazzle him with her beauty, and next to dazzle her with his gold, as he hoped by this means to get her off his own hands, as she greatly interfered with his present passion for the Princess de Condé.

The beautiful Chateauneuf boasted the finest form, the most exquisite complexion and hair, of any of the beauties of the Court. Her eyes were full of fire and spirit, yet had softness at will, which could fascinate the coldest heart: her temper was arrogant, violent, and vindictive, and her morals of the most equivocal order.

The second lady was La Baronne de Sauves, whose beauty and whose character were equally acknowledged and notorious with that of her companion.

The third was of humbler rank, but her sent position placed her for a time on an lity with the others, as her extreme love might well entitle her to expect. a full oval, her eyes lively and finely cu forehead small, her nose exquisitely propo ed, her mouth like a rose-bud, and her petite and perfect in its symmetry: bu principal charm was her gaiety and grac the wit and vivacity of her conversation, s she was generally considered worthy anagram which had been made from her of Marie Touchet-Je charme tout.

Fascinating as these ladies were their racters were so well-known both at Cou in the city, that their coming, unaccomby any of those of higher condition with they, at least the two first, were from their associated, was not a circumstance which peared very flattering to the Prévôt, a style of assumption of his relative Mari treated him with the same air of hauteur others, nettled and annoved him.

"Well, Nantouillet," said the fair De S "you receive us with the air of a finished tier. Truly, in general, you of the bour do not consider the difference of taste suf ly which our relative positions by the rive There is as much variety as in the various provinces: those of the Tuileries are the singing birds, while those of the town are the sparrows and crows of society."

"The Prévôt," said De Chateauneuf, "is quite a courtier: he has derived his fine manners from the very walls of his Château: the Montgomery would be quite shamed could he return to see the present inmate."

"But, pray," exclaimed La Touchet, "preent your fair friends to us; we long to make their acquaintance."

Nantouillet, scarcely knowing whether civiliy or impertinence was intended, hastened to name the two wives of his friends, as Madame Foutevoye and Madame Mellet. The ladies, with great formality, returned the overstrained compliments of the fashionable guests whose cold looks and feigned admiration disconcerted them not a little.

"Holy saints!" cried La Touchet, "what a ovely dress you have on, Madame Voirtout. This vertugadin is worth a journey to behold, or a lover of antiquity. How becoming it must have been to your respectable mother in her ala days! Could you oblige me with the patern? it would make my fortune at court."

"But, Madame Mellet," exclaimed the King,

"what exquisite pattins you wear; they so positively a foot high. Touchet, those pisals of yours make you look like a mere dwarf; you must positively have shoes that will give you the majesty of our city ladies, which is really quite remarkable."

Madame Mellet blushed and smiled, such gratified at the compliment; while the pretty Marie put forth her tiny foot, covered with a low shoe of embroidered stuff, with flat help, and exhibited her tight silk stocking, then a new and esteemed fashion. She pouted and turned her back on Charles; then suddenly whirling round several times, stopped her grassful little figure before the astonished city lates, and threw herself into the attitude of a figure ed, and the Prévôt looked on with dismay, and ing certain that some plan had been concessed to annoy his female friends.

The gentlemen of the party, besides the real guests, were most of them famous as leader of fashion, and known to be the most unscraptions and daring young cavaliers in that licensed court. When the Prévôt observed the Similar De Quelus, Riberac, St. Mesgrin, Maugine, D'Entragues, Chomberg, Livarot, Du Guest Bussy d'Amboise, D'O, La Mole, Coconne and

others, he trembled for the propriety of his entertainment, and wished it fairly at an end.

This troop of gay gallants began with extreme familiarity to examine all the adornments of the house, the plate, and furniture, and pictures, and all appeared to excite pleasurable sensations in their minds; so that the vanity of the host was so much gratified that he forgave the want of ceremony which permitted them to amuse themselves by whispers and shouts of laughter every now and then. By degrees poor Nantouillet began to feel himself happy and ready to offer every amusement in his power to his obliging visitors; but ever and amon would come a misgiving that all was not tight, and the alternation kept him in a state of fadgety agitation.

The young King of Navarre and the Duke of Anjou were at first grave and taciturn; but their natural spirits prevailed in a short time, and they appeared as gay and inquisitive as the rest.

"Marie," said King Charles, "we stand on no ceremony here: you shall be our hostess and I will act as host myself; therefore, good Nantouillet, bestir, for we mean to enjoy ourselves to the full extent of the powers of the Hôtel d'Hercule. Bring some wine, and let us on his knees, and Charles insisting of ceremony being gone through to Touchet, she accepted the honour dignity, and the cup went round more past was then served amidst the congratulations of the guests, and began to think that the recommendagiven to his young friends of the Comptes was not altogether judicious noise and confusion he had seldom most boisterous city meeting.

The King seemed to take a spite in harassing Nantouillet, who stood chair, — now begging for one thir treating for another, now directing to f his friends to some omission, whelming his host with hyperboliments, which elicited great laught present. The court ladies entered the hilarity of the scene; but the total court ladies in the scene is but the treatment of the scene; but the scene; b

another cup should go round to the health of the ladies, and that a kiss from each should be granted to all claimants.

Madame Toutevoye grew red and pale, and Madame Mellet signed to her husband to interfere. That worthy was, however, so joyously disposed, that he disregarded all hints; but Toutevoye, a remarkably short fat man, with a very red face, rose to represent that the ladies of the city were not accustomed to this style of manners, and in their name he begged to decline the honour intended.

"Answer for yourself, vieux jaloux," exclaimed D'O. "Do you suppose either of these lovely creatures will object when royalty commands? Sit down; interrupt not the festivity by your impertinent observations, or you shall be shut up in yonder coffer till you learn better manners."

This threat caused much merriment, and Toutevoye was obliged to submit, as were the ladies, who endured the obstreperous gallantry as they best might. No one but Charles, however, ventured to salute Marie, till La Mole, with marked effrontery, approached and insisted on claiming his right. Marie laughingly consented, but observed in an instant that the effect her compliance had on her royal lover

was far from that produced by a mere joke: his face became livid with rage, and his eyes yellow and distended. La Mole, proud of his triumph, did not observe the glance of fury sent after him as he lounged back to his seat.

In the confusion which prevailed the two city ladies contrived to slip from the chamber, and gaining the outer hall and the court called for their attendants, and quitted the house unperceived. Their departure was not at first noticed; but when it was, much clamour ensued, and their husbands were called upon to apologise for their conduct.

"Messire Toutevoye," cried the King of Poland, "you must answer this—we are aggrieved Your brother Sheriff does not appear quite able to address us; but of you we demand an explanation of this desertion."

Toutevoye attempted to rise, but found himself so unsteady that he preferred keeping his seat, and, after several inarticulate attempts to speak, gave up the defence.

"Let us take care of the good Sheriff," cried several voices.

"D'O, you recommended yonder coffer; methinks it would just hold him," cried Henry of Navarre.

"Excellent!" exclaimed one of the guests.

"In with him!—never mind the key! It is locked, but this dagger is just as good."

So saying, a dagger was applied to the lock of a large chest in the chamber, in spite of the remonstrances of Nantouillet.

"Gentlemen — sire — they will spoil my fine coffer; it is of great price—and my good friend Toutevoye will be smothered. For pity's sake, do not put him in there!—he is too fat!—he will be killed!"

But they cared little for his exclamations, or the faint struggles of the almost insensible Sheriff, who was thrust into the coffer; and as the hinges of the lid had been wrested off, they proceeded to tear down some of the fine hangings, and stuffing them into it likewise, completely evered the unlucky dignitary, whom they left, with every chance of being stifled, in his unexpected retreat.

"Now," cried Charles, who appeared greatly excited, "let us prove to our good Prévôt how much we appreciate the welcome he has given us, and finish the evening with some gambols which he will not easily forget."

"Well said, my royal brother," cried the King of Poland. "Shall I teach him to play at bilboquet? I am acknowledged the best hand in France. Here, D'Entragues, reach me that toy. It will exactly answer my purpose."

- "Hold, hold!" screamed Nantouillet. "It is my famous watch of Geneva, worth a king's ransom. What are you going to do with it, is heaven's name?"
- "You shall see," replied the King elect, at the same time seizing the large watch, and throwing it in the air as he held under it a rich enamelled cup.
- "A miss! a miss!" cried the courtiers, as the heavy watch descended, smashing the cap to atoms, and falling on the table amongst crystal and china, demolishing all in its course.
- "I am undone!" cried Nantouillet, wringing his hands. "Grebau's masterpiece!—such so other does not exist in France!"
- "Oh!" cried D'Entragues, "the reason his considered is, that he forgot to fasten his his boquet with a chain. That you wear, Prévis, will just serve."

As he spoke, he made a spring at the Prévil and catching at the gold chain he wore, slipped it over his head as dexterously as possible.

"Par la mort Dieu!" cried Charles, "no in reur de laine could have succeeded better Give the chain to la dame de ses pensées, in helle Renée."

Renée de Chateauneuf took the chain with laughter, and placed it round her beautiful neck. "You shall be my slave in spite of yourself," said she, "though I am forced to wear your chains."

"Alas!" said De Sauves, "has the Prévôt to trifle to spare for me, or Marie, his own relation; he is so brave that his glittering rings and brooches excite our envy."

"They are yours," said Charles. "Prévôt, those rings will best suit these fair fingers. Present them straight, and do honour to your breeding."

"Nay," said the suffering host, "this is be-

"Family of an old apothecary! an old money-lender!" screamed the courtiers. "Confusion to all misers! Give up the jewels straight! Despoil the traitor!"

This order was quickly obeyed, and the gems transferred to the lively fair ones, who, thus furnished, received whispering instructions from their jocose friends, and taking leave of Nantouillet with exceeding ceremony, were conducted to their litters, and took their way to their respective domiciles, laden with the spoil won for them by their zealous champions.

No sooner were they departed than a general

uproar ensued; every guest produced from his pocket, with which he covered

"Now, bons garçons!" cried Charle are all alike: a mask tells no tales, and free to help ourselves to the Prévôt's p which like a loyal subject he offers for ceptance."

In an instant every part of the hor ransacked; with incredible speed the possession of the piles of plate; the tal seats were overturned in every direct many as possible of the lights exting and, in spite of the resistance of the i opposed them, valuables of every des were thrown from the windows to men to who made off with them instantly; part were torn from the walls; statues dense china dashed to atoms; caskets and bor ried away; chests broken open, and em their contents; money and jewels act for, and the pillage of the Hôtel d'I complete.

In the midst of this chaos a party of t active had seized Nantouillet, and bou to one of the pillars in his own hall, round him broken seats, tables, and fragments of furniture. From this e position he could behold the destruction

while his loud cries were drowned in the se and clamour which accompanied the franmirth of his royal and noble guests. His ad of attendant clerks had opposed as much possible the desolation going on, and his serits had exerted themselves against the maskdelinquents, but a reinforcement of their in people from below had greatly increased in forces, and disorder appeared to have need the day.

The unfortunate Prévôt made the most deerate efforts to free himself, and had succeedin extricating one arm, when a mask rushed wards, and called in a voice which he could t mistake, "Mort Dieu! it were glorious to fire to the martyr's pile. Maugiron! D'O! ing me a torch!"

This suggestion appeared to give great satisction, and several ran to execute the commison, when a mask coming behind him cut the ord with which the Prévôt was bound, and he aped down upon the man who had given this bunsel, dealing him blows of no very gentle ature, while his deliverer stood by, apparently such entertained. They struggled and pomled each other for some time, till at length the incendiary mask was fairly thrust down mongst the broken furniture, and but for his friends would have fared but ill from the ated Nantouillet, on whom an empty of a mutilated form were cast by his rewho, dragging forth their companion, reto assist in the pillage of a cabinet of the doors of which their daggers were lishing.

As the Prévôt lay panting on the g voice near him, almost stifled with me exclaimed, "Téte bleue! Prévôt, lose or they will be back, and you will be saint and martyr of in spite of your stra

"Wretch!" cried Nantouillet, "thief bond that you are, how can I rise with lumber upon me? What new villany going to enact with the semblance o ship?"

"You are wrong," said the first spe do not want to harm you. On the take my advice, and fly. I will help escape."

"What! and leave my house to the these ruffians? Your advice tells what and I will not leave you without your the chastisement your gang of robbers d

So saying, the Prévôt flew at the m had dragged away some of the furnit afforded him a means of rising, and, re of his expostulations, began to load him with blows and abuse. He found, however, that his adversary did not attempt to return his strokes, but, parrying them, continued to laugh and call out,

"You are beating a friend, Prévôt. Cap de dieu! don't stand pommeling me thus; but look to your safety, or it will be too late. You have been villanously treated. I will repair my part some day, if it please my good stars. I will stay here, and prevent their setting the hotel on fire. Make your way out, and call your friends together. I hear a noise and scuffle without. Hence! without a word more."

Nantouillet thought he could do no better than follow this advice; and leaving his unknown friend, whom by his Gascon accent he began to imagine was no stranger, he darted off to the outer court, where he beheld some of the young clerks contending with the other party.

"Courage, Nantouillet!" cried one of them, "friends are not far off. Bid your people resist a little longer, and we shall foil them yet."

At this moment a party of the Queen's guards were seen advancing to the gates, which were left open by those who were bearing off their ill-gotten treasures, and an order was given in the Queen's name that the confusion should

cease. Some of the most active of the rote pressed past the guard, who seemed but luke warm in their defence, and others rushed back to those within the house, to inform them of the sudden interruption. While the two parties were violently contesting their several rights,—and in the meantime the property of the Prevôt suffered from both,—a cry was heard from the clerks, which was answered by one without, and the court, the halls, the corridors, the whole building was filled with men armed with sticks and staves, bludgeons, and weapons of all descriptions, who called as they rushed along, "A nous les amis! à la rescousse! voici l'Empereur de Galilée! voici le Roi de la Bazoche!"

A tremendous encounter now ensued, and the terrified Prévôt saw his dwelling a prey to the most unheard-of disorder, hardly knowing by whom he was injured most—his friends of his foes. The masked combatants began, however, to give way before the superior number of their assailants, by whom they were ill-treated and beaten in the most irreverent manner. It seemed as if the whole Chambre des Comptes had sent out every clerk in its jurisdiction, so much did they, who claimed the high-sounding titles proclaimed on all sides, swarm to the fray.

Long and serious was the conflict; but at ngth the cheers of the Emperor's party, and e shouts of the subjects of the Bazoche, proaimed the victory over the more legitimate vereigns, who were fain to make their retreat, vered by their few still faithful friends, who, sputing to the last, got away amidst the exeations of the mob, the shouts of triumph of the clerks, and the anathemas of the despoiled ost, who cursed the hour when he beheld nder his roof so many crowned heads, both egitimate and imaginary.

Thus ended the farce of the Hôtel d'Hercule, recorded by a contemporary historian, a fitting accompaniment to the tragedy of St. Bartholomew!

CHAPTER IX.

L'ENFANT DE PARIS.

If they will fight with us, bid them come down Or void the field.

If they do neither, we will come to them.

King Henry V.

EXTENDING far round the church and about of St. Germain, called des Prés, were number rous fields the rightful possession of which fact the earliest times had been a source of dispute between the students of the different Universities of Paris and the monks of the about the former insisted on making use of the space for their amusement and recreation, and frequent disorders were the consequence of the permission, which had been wrested from, rather than granted by, the fathers. It required so one time no less than seventeen cardinals and a hundred and twenty-four bishops to discuss the matter of these disputed privileges, at a com-

il held at Tours; on which occasion the clerks r students were condemned to perpetual silence, -an injunction which they were not at that, or any subsequent period, particularly prompt in attending to; and having, at a later time, again come forward to rescue their favourite fields from the clutches of the monks, the students were allowed the victory, and the right adjudged to them of walking in the precincts. Of this permission they certainly took advantage; but were very far from confining themselves to the sober pace laid down for them. Not only did they walk, but run, leap, dance, and play at all sorts of games; but this was not sufficient to satisfy their ideas of liberty enjoyed in their own domains, so that of combats, duels, political meetings, and all that could be transacted by the notous and self-willed youth of Paris to create disturbance, the Prés aux Clercs was made the theatre. In the time of St. Louis this space provided a champ clos to the abbey, where disputes were decided by single combat; and here, in 1357, Charles le Mauvais, King of Navarre, harangued the Parisians.

One of the principal objects of contention had been the right of fishing in the canal called La Petite Seine, which abounded in excellent fish; and scarcely a year passed without some

riots taking place to defend the privilege, which the students were resolved not to relinquish, and the monks were equally determined to maintain.

Early one fine morning a large party of young men had sallied forth with the intention of pursuing their sport, and had established themselves in a good situation to enjoy it. They were not without misgivings that their old enemies, the monks, would come to interrupt their amusement; and they, it must be confessed, rather desired than dreaded such an event.

"The greedy old drones," said Belcastel, a young student, who has been before mentioned, "grudge us this little pleasure, when they have store of entertainment within their walls, much more fit, if report speaks true, for lay men like us to partake of. Every one knows the story of l'Enfant de Paris, as brother Jacques Berson is called, and Le Cordelier aux Belles Mains: and I doubt not there are plenty more equally edifying if we had the luck to find them out."

"I never heard of l'Enfant de Paris," said one of the youngest; "do tell me what his adventures were."

All the young men laughed.

"You are but newly come," said they, "or

ou could not fail to know it. Do, Belcastel, alighten his mind on the subject: it is a pity be should not feel a proper reverence for these holy fathers, who give us laws. I should like to duck them all in this lake, which they dare to call theirs."

"The time may come yet," said Belcastel, "for they are getting arrogant beyond endurance, in consequence of our mildness and forbearance. We must take care that they invade not our rights: for let them once gain an inch of the Pré, and we shall find it difficult to drive them out. I propose, when our fishing is over, that we visit the bounds; for I heard that they had built some out-houses for their wood and lumber within our precincts, which we must not permit."

"Right," answered several voices, "we will see to it without delay."

"But the story, Belcastel,—the story" reiterated the young student; "let us hear it first."

"Oh!" said Belcastel, "it is more gay than religious, I promise you, and our ill neighbours, the monks, are not fond of hearing it repeated. You must know that in yonder convent there were some brothers, who enjoyed the reputation of extraordinary sanctity, and amongst

he was under the especial protecti heavenly powers, for he was found lying on the steps of the high alt priest who went there to commence as the doors had been closed all there was no child there when they to rest, it was clear that it was brough a miracle. Well: the brothers ad heaven-sent infant, and he became tiest boy amongst the choristers, with fine that people flocked in crowds to never doubting that they listened to another sphere. In the course of youth became as famous for his pr for his singing; and as for confessing of the whole fraternity could equa giving satisfaction to his penitents, p the female part of the community quite edifying to hear the beautiful to voice expounding difficult passages wi ished that certain rumours which the Hugueots, of course, set afloat about the manner in hich he and others of his brethren passed heir lives within the convent were treated, as tey deserved to be, with contempt and dis-

"It happened that l'Enfant de Paris had a ry particular friendship for one of the young onks, who had lately entered the convent, d who had arrived in a manner little less mysrious than himself, for he was found one eveng at prayers in the cell of a holy brother latedeceased, dressed in his habit; and, as he we no account of himself, and appeared exemely devout, there was no doubt entertained at he was the identical old monk himself, on hom the Virgin had bestowed new life, peritting him to assume the youth which he joyed at the time of entering the convent any years before. This young brother, who s called Antoine, was remarkable for a sweet ice and such white hands, that the people ve him the name of Le Cordelier aux belles ins. L'Enfant and he were seldom separated; their devotions were performed together; d it was remarked that so rapt were they in avenly communing that they have been known kneel for days together before the crucifix, VOL. II. H

each in his cell, without motion, or an to quit their prayers to partake of the meals. This was, of course, a miracl often would the monks gaze in upon the phic brethren by stealth, observing he how calm, and how absorbed was the tion, which nothing disturbed. By deg period of their abstraction became len, and they would sometimes continue state of holy trance for weeks together then suddenly resume their former had nothing remarkable had occurred.

"About this time a young couple can side in a pretty country-house not far monastery, on the banks of the rive were both extremely handsome and a and as they were well off, and invit neighbours to many friendly parties, & to pass the day in the fields, sometim theatres and fairs, and were always join in any jovial meetings, they we favourites in the part of the town wh resided: they lived in the same place years, occasionally leaving their house excursions, and returning. One or to children increased their happiness, were considered as patterns of coniu and attachment.

"One night the whole neighbourhood was alarmed by a report that the abbey of St. Germain des Prés was on fire. Every one hastened to the spot, and amongst others who were admitted by the terrified monks to assist in putting out the flames was a party of workmen, who, being active stirring young men, used very successful exertions to prevent the destruction which threatened the building. That part of the convent which was most in danger was where the cells of the two seraphic monks were situated, who were at that very time in their state of abstraction from the world, and great fears were entertained by many of the brotherhood that they would fall victims to their religious fervour: some of the monks were, however, opposed to their being disturbed, as they professed to believe that the wing in which such holy personages were found could not suffer; but this opinion being overruled, and the fire becoming fierce, the workmen hurried in separate bodies to the two cells, which communicated with each other. There a singular sight presented itself; the brothers were on their knees, their faces and eyes turned up towards the altar, their hands raised and clasped; and, regardless of all the confusion around, there they remained, in the most edifying state of unconsciousness. The men paused at the threshold in awe-struck admiration, and prosently they observed that the countenances of the pious pair began to change, large tears subdown their cheeks, their eyes seemed fading away, their hands withering from sight, and they gazed, and the flames increased, suddenly the brothers disappeared altogether, and the bundles of clothes remained alone, swimming a sea of—wax!

"'A miracle! a miracle!' shouted several the brothers; but the profane persons who had watched the progress of this transformation replied only by a peal of laughter, and exchanging mations of 'Des saints de cire!'

"Suffice it to say, that the flames were extinguished, and order restored in the convent; but the next day a wonderful change took place in the cottage of the young couple before mentioned. The superior of the convent, with a body of monks, was seen to enter in at the front-door, through the pretty garden, but mone saw them depart; and from that hour to this no inhabitant was observed in the cottage, though the young husband, his wife and children, were well and gay the night before.

"L'Enfant de Paris resumed his preaching after a time, as before, and two beautiful little

thoristers were added to the choir, who on promondays appeared as St. Johns or angels; It 'Le Cordelier aux belles mains' was transted, doubtless, to the skies from whence he meended, as he was never seen in the convent ain.

There lives in the Rue Qui-mi-trouva-si
** a pretty widow, remarkably devout, and
te a pattern to the young coquettes round
ut, who is considered marvellously like the

* of the handsome tenant of the cottage by
river. She has no children of her own; but

**sionally superintends the little choristers in

* of their sickness, or any accident befalling
n; for she gives her whole time to religious
rcises, and is a constant attendant at the

**mons of the Enfant de Paris.

The ground on which the cottage stood was ght by the monks of St. Germain; and a dener in digging one day was surprised to sover under a flat stone some steps, and a ered way, which he pursued for a few paces; meeting with a wall of brick, he could go further; and a monk passing by was so nded at his idle curiosity and neglect of his k, that he was never afterwards employed the premises.

Ancient name of a street in Paris.

"This is the story; which you will confess has some curious features, which makes the miracle of the 'Cordelier aux belles mains' worthy to take its place with many others which the pestilent Huguenotaille have the impudence to disbelieve."

This history of Belcastel excited much mich amongst the sworn enemies of the monks, and disposed them still more to proceed in the purpose of ascertaining that their rights had not been invaded. Accordingly, they were paring to put an end to their fishing, and call lecting their tackle, when they observed at a distance some of the monks approaching.

"Do you see yon black cloud?" said Becastel: "methinks it portends a storm."

"Had we not better seek shelter?" suggested one of the most timid of the party.

"We are on our own ground, and fishing in our own river, and we will give way to no inter-

"Let us stand to it," repeated the students; "and if it comes to blows, try which will is hardest."

By this time the monks had come near, and the foremost amongst them, who was a fat, short ambling individual, called out in a threatening oice for the students to leave off their sport, nd to resign what they had already caught to heir rightful owners.

A shower of pebbles and a volley of abuse was all the answer returned, which made the nonks turn upon their heels and run a consideable distance, till they had reached a wall, beaind which they sheltered themselves; and their hampion, who was the Petit Feuillant himself, volunteered to harangue the disorderly band, who so irreverently received them. Accordingly he mounted on a high stone, which caused his head to appear just above the protecting wall, and waving his hand for silence to the students, who were approaching with no very peaceful spects, he proceeded to set forth the enormity of their proceedings, and to exhort them to more conformable conduct. But his advice was cut short by vells and hisses, and cries of "A bas les barbes frisés ! "-"A bas les Renards !"

"Let me exhort you, my youthful brethren," roared the Petit Feuillant at the top of his fine voice, "to listen to gentle words, and to follow friendly advice: lay down your ill-gotten spoils at the feet of the servants of Heaven, whose sole nourishment is derived from those waves which you dare to disturb. St. Anthony, the protector and friend of fishes, when he deliver-

ed his famous sermon to those animals, informal them that should they yield up their bodies to the enemies of the church they should be changed into lizards, toads, and other uncless creatures, and become unwholesome mest the invaders of their region. He consecrated them servants of the church: and I warn warn sinners as ye are, that every scale upon these fish, which look at this moment so fresh tempting, and worthy to fill the pans of brethren, will become a snake to sting ye, a toad to spit at ye. Resign them, therefore in time; depart, and trouble us not; we will straightway possess ourselves of your tackle and destroy it on the spot."

"We can preach as well as you, most respectable and reverend father," returned Bellike to hear a sermon, we are ready to early the brethren with one in your own style; or, the brethren with one in your own style; or, the brethren with one in your own style; or, the you prefer discoursing, we are content to which we will presently construct, and leaving you our small provision of fishes, we will will patiently for as many days as you please, listering to your arguments why we should let you out or give you more to eat for the remainder of your natural lives. We have plenty of com-

ades, who will gladly furnish us with vivers uring our patient sojourn, and at the end of a reek we shall see who has the best of the disussion."

"Friend," said the Petit Feuillant, "the holy rethren are so accustomed to fast, that what ou propose would be no privation whatever to hem; nevertheless, as the convent-bell is now inging for refection, and we are in want of hose scaly comforts which you have seized, we equest you to deliver them forthwith."

He here made a sign to the monks, who, merging suddenly from behind their wall, there they had sticks and staves concealed, ommenced a furious assault upon the students, reaking their lines and destroying their nets, and dealing hard blows around them. They were, however, received with much warmth, and kicks, cuffs, and blows were dealt with equal vigour on both sides; but the young men, being unarmed, were no match for their more numerous assailants, and were obliged to retreat, leaving the produce of their day's sport a prey to the exulting monks, who, seizing it eagerly, in spite of all the struggles of the opposite party to prevent them, made off with the Prize, and were soon safely housed within their convent; the Petit Feuillant leading the way.



true which announced the innothey resolved that many hours sho before all the sheds, ricks, outhor bles erected on their ground, sho from the face of the land. Therefore, back to their college news of the success of the monisult offered to their body, spread and a call for vengeance was reenthusiasm by every member of community.

CHAPTER X.

THE ABBEY.

And strokes like that of a battering-ram

Did shake the strong church door.

Old Woman of Berkeley.

WHEN Alix, after being conveyed away from the theatre of Ganasso, recovered her consciousuess, she found herself in a chamber where every object was entirely unknown to her. It was furnished in a style of luxury which accorded somewhat strangely with the monastic character of the roof and high-pointed window. Rich tapestry with gold fringe depended from the walls, and mats of oriental fabric were spread on the marble floors; a high cabinet of inlaid ivory and mother of pearl stood in the recess of the window; and coffers, then commonly used for seats, richly ornamented with gold leather, stood near the walls. Incense of fragrant wood was burning in alabaster lamps, hanging by silver chains from crossed arrows with gilded

heads, and other emblematical device delicate figures of Cupids in white groups, chiseled with consummate sh half hid by flowers arranged in garls one recess of the chamber was a gorge namented altar, on which stood a Cupid his bow, and before him, as offerin placed nests of filigree gold work, c birds and eggs in enamel. A small mirror hung behind the statue, and ref symmetry. At one side of the room clavicorde, beautifully carved, and op the instrument had been recently touch there was an air of mysterious beau pervaded the whole which Alix could: prehend.

She turned her gaze towards the win it was too high from the ground for it tempt to see what was beyond. A rich streamed through the coloured glass, we less intense in colour than that which filled up the elaborate leaden lattice this sort of window, while that in the compartments was partly painted in the called grisaille, introduced not many y fore by the celebrated artist Jean Cousi delicate grey and white tracery permittal lier light to enter.

She walked round her splendid prison, and xamined the tapestry; but she could discover to door nor outlet of any description, so artfully were the carved panels inserted; and she bezan to fancy she was in a dream of some enhanted palace, where a fairy could alone enter. Hour after hour elapsed, but her solitude was andisturbed, and she became more and more larmed and uneasy at her extraordinary posiion, and the impossibility of explaining it. She ecalled to her mind the appearance of the eclesiastic who had betrayed her with an appearnce of friendliness. She pictured to herself er father's anxiety and fears for her safety,he suspicions he might entertain of her having withdrawn from his roof to avoid Bianco, and is anger and vexation. She thought, too, of Laude with blushes and tears, and she reroached herself with having received his wowal so coldly, and replied so ungraciously, s she imagined, to his generous offers of serrice: then she recalled the half acknowledgnent she had allowed to escape of her feelings owards him, and she trembled lest she had said oo much.

While she thus mused the tapestry was gently ithdrawn, and by means of a sliding panel a gure was admitted, which Alix instantly re-

cognised as that of the monk to whose peridious offers of protection she owed her present captivity. He paused as he entered, and three himself into an attitude of admiration.

"Cupido dio!" exclaimed he, affectedly,—
"what a form! How fares my lovely prize?"
But I need not ask, when I behold such beauty."

"What," said Alix, rising, "am I to understand by these words? Am I an object of insult or contempt? Why am I here? and in what purpose did you think fit to deceive thus? I insist upon being immediately conducted to my home and my father."

"Sweet incensed," said the Petit Feuillas, "it grieves me to deny any of your requests, to refuse to answer any of your numerous quantions; but circumstances render me inflexible; and since you must alike submit to them, I amount to commend you to follow the advice of the safe who advises us to think of joy in order to drive away the thought of pain, and to conquer sor row by diverting it."

"This jargon is unintelligible to me," side Alix. "Where am I? and by what right do you, whom I know not, detain me from sy friends?"

"Where you are, fair enslaver," returned

lontgaillard, "I am not at liberty to inform ou. By the right of conquest you are here; and I detain you from your supposed friends, in order to secure to you real ones. I am aware, sweet Alix, of your position. René Bianco—"

"Oh, heavens!" interrupted Alix. "Surely lam not in the power of that detested wretch? Itell you nothing on earth shall induce me to listen to one word the murderer has to say."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied the monk, toolly opening his comfit-box, which he offered her with great politeness, regardless of her averted looks, "for it would be a great mortification were it otherwise; but so few women do care for their affianced husbands, that your distaste for the Florentine does not surprise But, my sweet friend, you have been in this retreat some time, and my duty as an ecdesiastic obliges me to name to you that during the whole period - for you have been watched by other eyes than Cupid's-I have observed in all your distress, and amidst all your tears, which but render your bright eyes brighter, you have never had recourse to the intercession of any of the saints to assist you. This is a strange omission, and in these heretical times might breed fearful suspicions."

As he spoke, there was a sarcastic expression

n us we winch convinced Alix that he we sware the or at least suspected, the nature of ter latte. The immediately conceived as the text ter extraordinary abstraction had some or levence to that lack and sine trembled as determined in the late which might be in some for text. Finding sine that not reply, the Pall Familiant communed.

"Our court ladies," said he, "although ing lave, in fact, but little sanctity, yet pressering appearance of it, and wear in their incomes the emblems of our sacred faith; later the later no saving sign, alternoot therefore expect that the saints will interfere to help you."

"It ill becomes one of your sacred calling" said Alix, "to reproach an apparent neglect of duty, when he himself acts in a manner opposed to all the precepts which he is accommed to instil."

Montgaillard smiled, —"I shall answer yet by a parable," said he. "A countryman, deguated at the profligate character of the miniter of his village, refused to attend mass. He seated himself during the time of divine service by the side of a clear stream, when he was accosted by a friend, who, hearing his reason for

o visit the church, led him to the ne rivulet, where the water was thick, and apparently choked with weeds. said he, 'that the water, whose npure, is not in itself less clear and us the word of God, preached by an ninister, is not the less to be re-

ossible," said Alix, "that you dare coclaim your own unworthiness by ourself to the wicked priest; yet, our faults, continue in the commisne?"

replied Montgaillard with affected "I am too humble to claim virtues not my own, and am content with the which I enjoy. Content, my sweet is one of the first duties; and as auty does not frown on me, as I am see you do now, — as long as gold is—and I hear no bad music, nor suffer cooks, I venture to hope that I follow ithfully, for there are few happier or in conscience than he who now ento smooth the brow where anger ser sit, and forget all your vexations of a little philosophy,—for you are

totally unable to leave this place, and reprocess or entreaties only distress me, while they can not aid you in the least."

"Leave me, frivolous and abandoned man!" said Alix indignantly; "let me not be disgusted with hearing the language of levity from his which should only move in prayer."

"Fair Huguenot!" replied the Petit Feellant, — "for so I doubt not I ought to call you—you are cruelly severe."

"Monk!" said Alix, "I disdain consent, ment, and should blush to belong to a which harbours in its bosom such impure ministers as yourself. I am ready to pay the penalty of my belief. Whatever fate may be adjudged to me, it will at least release me from Bianco, and his associates in crime."

"I admire your candour," said Montgailland, but you are singularly deceived. Bianco is ignorant of your present circumstances, and is at this moment, I doubt not, raging for is stolen mate, and moving the Court and the Saints for her recovery; your father is also entirely under the cloud of uncertainty. I also am the happy depositary of the secret."

"Under whose guidance, then, do you act?" exclaimed Alix. "Why was I not publicly accused and brought to trial, or why not at once

I for my opinions? Methinks but little ended most of the late executions of my late brethren! Why mock one victim pretence like this, when murder, to you are accustomed, might do its work ioned?"

intiful heretic!" answered the monk, re wandering in an inexplicable maze of murder or punishment has nothing whatdo with your present detention,—love is setting genius of all. Think not those could be destined to wither unadmired, by paltry grooms and adventuring No; you are sought and loved by one birth, of princely fortune, and of fascimanners."

d who is he," said Alix, in a tone of ontempt, "who takes such noble means the object of his exalted passion?"

; is at your feet!" exclaimed another and La Mole suddenly appeared before

started in extreme amazement, and rehim with so much surprise, as well as that he could not suppress a smile. His rson was adorned with the nicest care, ntenance was bright with exultation, and le demeanour expressive of satisfaction. In accents of the tenderest respect he uttent apologies and regrets, mingled with protest tions of attachment and vows of eternal true. She listened in silent fear, and the bewilds ment of her mind was now at its height, it the meaning of the strange position in which she was placed was more and more distant for her comprehension.

"Whoever you may be," she said at length and for whatever cause this drama has been got up, I desire to be no more an actor in and intreat you to retire and leave me unal lested. You are an entire stranger to me, and do I desire to become acquainted with persent who are either ridiculous or wicked."

La Mole was proceeding with infinite of quence to persuade her of the delicacy of feelings, the purity of his regard, and the spair which had urged him to the step he had taken when Montgaillard, who had retired the entered, returned suddenly in great consistent.

"My Lord," he cried, "a band of marauden have forced the gates of the convent. We prose them in vain! Hark! hear you not then sounds?—they bode no good to us or ours!"

While he spoke, a tremendous crash was

rithout, and a multitude of voices burst ears of the astonished group.

ey come!" shrieked Alix. "The murure again let loose!"

ly Mary!" cried Montgaillard, "what y here? We are no Huguenots. My a Mole, you must instantly show yourney will respect so staunch a friend to se of Holy Church."

cries without seemed to approach, loud sciferous, and proceeding from many

Mole sprang upon a seat, and piling annit he climbed to the cabinet, from the which he could look from the high win-

- .!" said he, "what means this? They
 Huguenots—they are storming the abhey wear students' robes."
- is!" cried the Petit Feuillant, who stood ig below with terror—" students, did you What will become of us!"
- s, repeated La Mole; "they are in an se body. They have burst the outer gate, rushing in crowds towards the walls: wbridge is down, and access will be easy n: they are destroying the trees, and

plucking branches, which they bear in triv What means all this?" he exclaimed, is down.

"St. Francis protect us!" said the more a faltering accent. "We must forthwith or ourselves: this isolated wing is no safe for us. The turbulent students accuse the ther about of encroaching on the Pré Clercs; and no doubt they are come to re themselves, and endeavour to regain ground. They seem to have come in a this time!"

"By the saints!" cried La Mole, "and mode of attack is something unpleasant!"

At this moment a wreath of smoke beg curl among the trees, the shouts without redoubled, and loud strokes were heard at the doors of the building.

Terrified at this proceeding, Montgarushed to unclose the secret panel of ent and La Mole, eager to prevent or averdanger, was following, when Alix, with entreated them not to abandon her to destion.

"You will be in no danger, lovely insens said La Mole. "I will close the panel, no one will discover your retreat. I thank

or reminding me of this, or my fair prize might

So saying, they both departed, leaving Alix sill a prisoner, and terrified to find herself bandoned to perish in the flames, which now see so high, that they threw a bright glow on the stained windows above her. She shrieked loudly for help, and exhausted herself in vain efforts to discover some means of egress. The roar without now became terrific, and thundering strokes redoubled, till presently loud crashes were heard, accompanied by new cries. Exerting every effort Alix climbed up towards the window by means of the pile raised by La Mole, and an extraordinary scene presented itself to her sight.

A confused crowd of artisans, labourers, shopmen, and persons of various descriptions, armed with weapons as singular as their appearance, were rushing along, headed by an almost countless number of young students in their caps and gowns, some of whom bearing torches darted from tree to tree (for the scene of her confinement was in the immense garden of the abbey), setting fire to everything they encountered, and urging on their followers with cries of, "Down with the walls! Fire and faggot for the thiev-

ish monks! Let us make martyrs of St. Nicholas' priests !"

A mass of ruins behind them showed how successful they had hitherto been in their advance; and the unequal contest they waged with a small band of armed men, - kept always in religious institutions in case of danger,-seemed to promise them victory. Suddenly a party of lay brethren, accompanied by a fresh body of guards, issued from the principal entrance, and the conflict then became serious. The furious mob had already gained the walls of that part of the building from whence Alix was a spectator of the fray, when a shock which made the massy fabric tremble announced that another door had been burst open. Alix beheld immediately after, amidst shouts and laughter, the Petit Feuillant borne on the shoulders of a party of students. His streaming garments and disordered appearance accorded well with the terrified expression of his countenance, as, hurrying him along with exclamations of contempt and ridicule, they reached the borders of a small lake directly under the window where Alix was stationed. Here they paused a moment, deliberating whether they should throw him in, when one of them cried out, "Hold, friends! We want not the lives of these robbing knaves. It

ent to duck him in the lake, to teach to oppress his neighbours."

d gentlemen!—good students!" shriektgaillard, "I am not of this order. I
euillant — an innocent stranger, who
mmitted offence against you. I am BerMontgaillard. Have pity, my gentle."

speaks sooth," said one of the students.
The Petit Feuillant, who dances the gailthe midnight processions,—the favourite
the fair dames of the court. Dip him
two or three times, and let him go; but
now you injure his delicate form."

renewed laughter, and in spite of the es and struggles of the monk, he was d, without much regard to the concludse in the address of the last speaker, n allowed to escape, amidst the taunts s of the mob.

dames were beginning to grow fainter, of the band of assailants seemed dispertire, having committed as much den on the Abbey property as they felt for ent inclined. Alix reflected that, should this chance of escape, her situation be most alarming, and she resolved to be protection of the students, in whose

her cries, by which means she tracted the attention of some of her, who having caught a glimpse as she bent eagerly forward, ren tack on that part of the building efforts, the paneling of the a way, and discovered her in the the high window. Some of the back, and a cry of "A miracle! Virgin herself!" was heard, and t of many showed their fear of ha far in attacking a sanctuary und tection. Alix lost no time in und by relating her unjust detention, by claiming their protection and restoring her to her father. She she might be without delay condi some of the gentlemen present, would declare her name when withdrawn. Two or three youn vanced, and having rescued her ous situation assured her she wa

streets, and already Alix began to hope he should reach her father's abode in when on a sudden the party was met by of the King's archers, conducted by a of the order of St. Germain des Prés, who ly fell upon them with a violence which, er resolute the students might be, they otally unable to withstand. A desperate le ensued, and, a crowd collecting rapidly, found herself exposed to new dangers. oung man who had been foremost in ting her, and whom his companions Belcastel, still, however, continued to in his stand near her, though all the had abandoned their charge to meet tack. At length the students gave way, er conductor cried out in an agitated

here is no safety for you. Fly, madam,

fearing in every person she saw t pursuer or an enemy. Hurrying utmost terror she was turning th street, when she beheld a troop riding at full speed, escorting a horses of which were impelled alo gard to any passengers who might dent or unlucky as to be in Such was the fashion among the g sidered a requisite method to in portance of the person within the minds of the foot-passengers. Be withdraw from the tumult, a horse not perceived her, or was unmind cumstance, passed her so close the ly escaped being crushed against t wall. She had just time to spri stone by the roadside when the wl passed; but the carriage was be furiously that one of the wheels c tact with the stone on which she s so violent a shock that the equipa

She could not repress a faint shriek, and leman instantly perceiving her, ordered e secured by his people, and leaping from icle, was in time to catch her in his , overcome with alarm and despair, she wn senseless.

lole had received the royal order to join y before La Rochelle, and had resolved the Abbey in order to see the fair prinere concealed before he set out on his. On escaping from the besieged build-the time of Montgaillard's seizure, he speed regained his people, who were in se, and awaiting only his command to be their route. His return, therefore, a unfavourable adventure was the signal arture; and springing into the carriage, h, though contrary to the custom of

engaged in military duties, he chose to he hurried forward on his way, - not

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lifeless form in the carriage, and gave he charge to his physician, while, mounting horse of one of his train, he rode by the of the vehicle, which resumed its course, the in a less impetuous manner.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROPOSAL.

My life thou shalt command but not my shame.

Shakspeare.

WHEN the President reached the place where had been told he should find his daughter, as was alarmed to discover no signs of her, and the man who directed him was no longer near. He hurried back without losing a moment, and met René and Ruggieri hastening towards him.

"Where is Alix?—where is my daughter?" he exclaimed; "an accident has separated us, and she must be, at this moment, struggling in the crowd."

"Blessed Saints!" cried René, "what an untoward event! The people are dispersing; there is scarcely one left in the theatre; she must have remained, expecting your return."

"No," suggested Ruggieri, "she has probably endeavoured to reach home under the proection of some friend. Let us fly to ascertain her safety." intended son-in-law was extreme of trace of her.

A thought flashed on the Presiden she had purposely withdrawn hers the hateful marriage to which she but he did not venture to hint his such a probability.

Bianco, furious with disappoir way to the utmost violence, accurand her father, and uttering vows against those who had carried he gieri acted his part with great d pearing to feel deeply for his frien indignant at the abduction, offering ance, and urging René to every expension.

"I will go instantly to the Qu exclaimed René; "she shall be power or cunning can effect it. I any suspicion, Bailly; had she lov or friends who would do this?"

"I am distracted with fear and her father, "and can point to no necked himself, for he thought of her late conssion, and calmed his momentary terror; but is mind was a chaos of confused ideas, and he arcely knew whom to trust, or on whom his oubts ought to fall.

Bianco returned to the Queen-mother in a tate of great agitation, and recounted to her ympathizing ear his tale of distress.

"This is some enemy," said Catherine.

"This secretary, this protégé of the Vache de Bearne, it may be who robs me of my bride, as he has hitherto frustrated my vengeance," exclaimed René.

"If so," replied Catherine, "despond not; you shall have both, if my influence can serve you. The King protects him, it is true; but when," said she, smiling bitterly, "did he find that he could outwit me? René, I am much disturbed; this Huguenoterie triumphs in spite of all;— there are risings in every part of the kingdom. In every Court our measures are condemned; that wily and squeamish heretic, Elizabeth of England, is against us. Our ambassador sends me word that, when he waited on her, to explain the late proceeding, he found the Court in mourning, and every eye turned on him with hostility. The cunning pedant, herself, was full of vituperation. Fénélon is not

warm in the cause; I will have De Retz goth her peevish island, and win her by his flattering what say you, René, would it not be well?

"Yes, madonna," answered René; "and wond not send some trusty messenger, with a taken of your Grace's regard to the vain Queen? I could prepare the present, and you would not long be troubled with her remonstrances. The Catholics are ripe in England for revolt. Why should not the Lady Marie Stuart reign, and this Tudor race be swept away at one blow?"

"How?" said the Queen; "and give the alliance for Anjou?—that were scarely politic."

"The Queen of England has many loven," answered the Italian; "these will content has she will never choose a husband to control her—believe it not, madonna, and be not be ceived by her feigned acquiescence in the proposals of the Duke."

"You are right," returned Catherine; "I never, to speak truth, trusted her a moment but we cannot show how little we rely on her I shall consider your proposal, and if I decide on this advice, which I think good, you shall yourself accompany De Retz to England, and be the means of ridding me of more foes. In the mean time, I will straight to the King, and

be active in your cause. The girl cannot be conveyed far away; and depend upon it, we shall soon hear of her. But leave me, René, now, for the King seeks me at this hour; and I see they are coming to announce him."

Bianco departed, full of vexation, and breathing vengeance against his supposed enemy, while King Charles, with little better spirit, took his place with the Queen-mother. He was irritable, and in one of his worst moods, for he had not lost the recollection of either the blows or vituperation he had lately received at the Prévôt Nantouillet's, and the evident detestation in which he was held by his subjects opened his eyes, too late, to the impolicy of the late barbarous act.

He entered the chamber hastily, and, throwing himself into a seat, exclaimed, as if scarcely regarding his mother,—

"I will have that rascal hanged,—a brute and idiot! That I should have to ask twice for my hawk, and then find the wretch had forgotten my orders altogether! I could tear him to pieces! I will be revenged on the dolt."

He continued to exclaim in this manner for some time, when Catherine, addressing him, said in a comtemptuous accent,—

"You would do better methinks to vent your

anger on those more deserving of it. You rave at a paltry groom for disobedience, while you suffer yourself to be dictated to by insolent subjects, who brave you to your face."

"Madam," cried he, starting up with fury, " you are the cause of all: you foment and encourage rebellion, and then throw the blame and punishment on me. I am hated, abhorred, treated with scorn by my people and my allies; and you urge me still. Yes,-vour hero-son, your beloved knight, shall have the means of distinguishing himself again. I will not have him always near you, and always scheming to win the world's affections from me. He shall command the army, which I will send against the obstinate Rochellois; and that without delay. I shall thus get rid of many plagues at once; and I care not if the stubborn fools hold out till the Polish subjects of my beloved brother send to claim him."

Catherine bit her lip, but did not condescend to notice the last allusion, when she replied,—

"You are right, Charles. An army must instantly be despatched to La Rochelle; and I approve greatly of your intention. La Nouë is the best man to negociate with them; for Biròn they will no longer listen to. La Nouë is their ancient governor, and they rely firmly

as long as it seems likely to avail us; her by stratagem or force the town must ours."

t think you we can trust La Nouë?"

e may," replied Catherine; "he is one of visionaries who imagine every one in ation directed by honour, which he conthe best policy; and with a few fine ng speeches, he will easily be persuaded these people into the net. Biròn will dy to take advantage of every circum; and if he has a powerful army to back access is certain."

he King of Poland shall head the troops," harles. "Navarre, Condé, and Anjou e there too. I will send all these active out of Paris at once, and while we have here, war shall flourish at a distancement reduce these towns without delay;

fallen, — like a swarm of locusts destroyed. Oh! that my eyes could have feasted on the carnage everywhere—that my arm could have dealt them death in every quarter!"

He walked rapidly about the chamber as in muttered the last words, while Catherine watched him with an expression of countenance discult to define. There was no affection, as sympathy in the glance: it told of mistrust and discontent,—but at the last, a gleam of satisfaction shone on her face as a sudden trust became evident to her; and she felt convinced that the mind of her elder son was giving way, his health declining, and his place likely to be left vacant for her beloved Henry to fill.

She was pleased to find that he constantly recurred to the delight he felt in the late messacres, and she despaired not of obtaining the life of the person against whom René had a feet

"the poor good woman deserves my thanks in her care of your health. You should conside her, my son; she grows old, and must be greatly fatigued. Has she sufficient attendants, and is she well cared for? I have been negligent of poor Mabille of late."

Charles, pleased at the interest shown in infavourite, answered gently that she was well

I trembled for her in the general confumaid his mother; "but doubtless you tharge of her safety."

"Yes," replied Charles, "I saved her by ing her into her chamber: what a night must have passed!"

berine, carelessly: "it was, indeed, a fearful for an old woman,—and alone."

harles stopped suddenly in his walk, and, with cumning which usually attends on madness, he was in a state bordering on that malady, se saw at once that his mother concealed some ign in her question, and he resolved to foil

^{&#}x27;She had a companion," said he, "whom I ifool enough to save too."

^{&#}x27;Indeed!" returned Catherine; "who is he?"
'Oh you know of him, then?" replied ries, laughing. "Why do you ask about him?
he aught to you or those near you? Has maire Bianco any business with him?"

^{*}Charles," said the Queen, "I will tell you truth. You must accord me one favour; seldom ask one, and this is of importance. at young man is a bitter Huguenot, and has ply injured a friend of mine. Give him up ny justice, and rid yourself of a dangerous

person, whom it is not prudent to keep about the palace. He is a spy of Navarre; I know a concerning him, and how he will be best disposed of."

"I care not," said the King. "Do with him as you will: only never let your Florential empiric dare to approach my nurse. I swear to you, madam," he cried, his eyes flashing fire "if harm ever comes to her I will destroy the accursed wizard, if my own death followed in instantly. I abhor his sight, he conjures up visions which I can never banish. Mother at night, every night, I see Jeanne of Navarre hovering round my bed, livid and spotted, as she died,—and you know how she died! oh God—that man!"

He covered his eyes with his hands, and sank down. Catherine, alarmed, called for assistance; and at that moment the young Queen Elizabeth being announced she left him to her gentle care and quitted him, well pleased to have obtained both the information and permission she desired.

Soothed and comforted by his amiable wife the unhappy Prince shortly recovered, and as his mind became calmer the cruel and gloom! thoughts he entertained by degrees disappeared, and he reflected, with uneasiness, on the tack emission he had given to deliver up the

After a time his ideas took another turn, and the despatched a page to summon Mabille and laude to his presence.

Claude during these events remained still n inmate of the Palace, nor could he summon esolution to attempt an escape, since, by doing he should absent himself from Alix, and se the chance of affording her assistance, in ase of need. Mabille, nevertheless, advised is delaying his departure, under some disuise, as little as possible; but as rigorous easures were still in force against the Prostants and great caution was requisite, she as the more readily induced to listen to his ruments on the advantage of his remaining mcealed in Paris. She persuaded him not attempt to visit Alix, as his presence might wolve her in extreme danger, but volunteered go herself and bring him tidings of her elfare. He did not attempt to conceal from er the secret of his heart; and, although she aw the improbability of any happy result, she ould not but listen with affectionate interest o his hopes and fears, and afford him all the onsolation in her power.

Deeply was she distressed on finding, when

she sought the house of the President, what had occurred; she feared to attempt to see Bailly, and could only vaguely learn the particulars of the disappearance of Alix. Vaining did she and Claude endeavour to account for her flight, without their being apprised of her intention, but they scarcely doubted that she had, by some sudden combination of untoward circumstances, been forced into this measure.

"This very night," exclaimed Claude, "I am resolved to attempt an escape from Paris. I feel certain that she has directed her steps to La Rochelle, where, Heaven grant, she may be able to arrive in safety. Oh! why did she reject my offer of protection! I could, at least have defended her with my arm, and now how is she attended? Can she be alone, unguarded? To what peril, what fearful peril has she exposed herself by this fatal delicacy! and I supine here, lingered in the vain hope that she would trust me."

While he yet spoke the summons that Charles had sent reached them, and, full of anxious hope, Claude followed Mabille to his chamber.

Arrived there, Charles received them with some appearance of kindness, and after a few words to the nurse he addressed Claude.

"Young man," he said, "your life has been aved by little less than a miracle, to me you we its preservation; but, as your fate is still my hands, it depends on yourself whether shall be your friend or enemy. Your safety quires that you quit Paris; you may be weak rough to suppose that not difficult, but, I tell ou, spies and guards are in every avenue, and, ere it not so, I do not intend that you should so fortunate in eluding my designs always. labille, I know, would willingly deceive me, r your sake, - even she would betray me, it I will not have it so. You shall act as dictate. Do not attempt to oppose my will; it will be of no avail, and I require your aid a point which concerns me. Will you do wthing to show your gratitude?"

"Anything, your Grace, that my conscience ill permit," said Claude, boldly.

The King sneered. "You Huguenots," he nswered "always prate of conscience, as if t was not the last thing that ever opposed man's interest. After his desires are satisfied, indeed," he added, musing, "sometimes the slumberer wakes,—too late. But to the purpose. You shall enlist as a volunteer in the army which I am sending against La Rochelle."

Claude started involuntarily, as he heard the place named where all his wishes tended.

"Your conduct will be well observed, and I expect good service from you," continued the King. "This squeamish conscience of yours may be at ease, methinks, when you find so many of your Huguenot friends have quieted theirs for the occasion. The King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé will, perhaps, be associates to whom you need not object."

"Where they are," replied Claude, "all the servants of your Grace should be proud to be; and, guided by them, I will act as a faithful and grateful subject should do."

"These are fine speeches," returned Charles contemptuously, "and, I dare say, you are all faithful, and attached, and obedient subjects,—so are my good people of La Rochelle; but their way of showing these virtues does not please me. I can teach you a much better, and require but one proof of your sincerity. Now listen to me. There are some good Catholics, as well as Huguenots, who are distasteful to me, and amongst them is the Count La Mole; he will be in command of some of my troops; I will give you opportunities of being near him, and I select you as an instrument to execute my purpose respecting him

has insulted—but what matters it why?"
e spoke, he clenched his hands, and shut his
a so closely that his words were scarcely
ble. "I am injured, and will be revenged!"
Your Grace," said Claude, shuddering,
anot mean—"

I mean," cried Charles, fiercely, "that you ld take away his life. I might have had one here, in Paris, at the Court;—am I master?—am I not to command—to pu?—but it will better content his favourers he should be supposed to die in fight, and uld not deprive my good brother of such a sure, for he loves him well."

Sire," said Claude, firmly, "my life is in hands; I am defenceless, and have no er to contend against your decree; but I unfit to act as an assassin, and I cannot pt the office."

e spoke proudly, and with dignity, and rles for a moment quailed beneath the flash is sparkling eye; but recovering himself in ustant, he added:

You are a fool, and a vain boy !—Hear the rnative. The Queen-mother has a favoucalled René Bianco; do you know him? I by your start, that you do; he is one at se name all honest men start, and I honour



you stand. I send for this good from and when you quit this chamber the his trusty agents are in your heart. Attempt to protect you, and nurse wring her hands in vain. On the I offer you escape by this private of are in readiness below, and atten I have chosen; in a few hours away from Paris and in safety. Your tender consciousness will served victim of my just anger: their ready to execute my will for a less I propose to make you. He dieshand must deal the blow; by all swear it!"

Claude, shrinking with horror, pidly in his own mind the fearfu presented to his choice. To read elle was his most desired aim: decase might be excusable; he saw to deal with a man little less that

is apparent compliance; he trusted to spose the mind of the King to better, and he also saw the possibility of g him whom he was directed to murthese considerations, and the certainty was fate was inevitable, should he reject ns, and that Alix would be left withpe of protection and assistance, dehim to assume a character at which I revolted, and he replied in a voice with emotion:

situation is hard, your Grace, I am ad and powerless; and if I might rely protection"—

may depend on it," interrupted "your reward shall be ample, and have relieved the country of a plotting, r traitor."

are obeyed," said Claude, struggling feelings. "I am the instrument of



write to him of you, therefore your lesson. Insinuate yourself fidence; he is a coxcomb, whose are not obliged to believe; that a task to impose on you. You a ther instructions—be sure and remember, I am not without my follow me,—never stop for fa stantly!"

He stamped his foot impatien embraced the weeping nurse, who in extreme distress. Claude foll to another chamber, and obeyed to throw a cloak over his dress him a purse, and a sealed paper him:

"This paper," said he, "will rity; it is signed by my hand, free and unmolested: take this necessities; and when you retuthe spot which I shall indicate,

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cend," said he, "and cross the court you will find horses and two guides, ow my will, as far as regards your jourou need make no remarks, nor ask any is: they know their duty — do you

So saying, the King closed the door him, and Claude descended the steps. ad all as had been described to him, and I the directions of his employer implire mounting one of the horses, without a e started off at speed, accompanied by panions which his singular position had ced to him.

d now," said Charles to himself, as he d, "I have outwitted my lady-mother, insolent baladin, La Mole, will find has attempted to supplant me once too

CHAPTER XIL

THE MEETING.

If there be truth in sight, you are my Rosalind!

SHARSPEARL

The maritime town of La Rochelle, of forming part of the enormous possessions of the beautiful and frail heiress Eléonore of Aquitaine, was, by her marriage with the Duke Normandy, transferred to England with the largest portion of France, which the impredence of Louis VII. had thus given into enemy's hand. This fine and important strong hold remained under the English dominion for some time: it was afterwards lost, and again won, being restored to England in exchange for Jean of France, the prisoner of Poitiers, to gether with three millions of gold crowns.

While it remained English, numerous privileges were granted which increased its industry augmented its population, and sowed in the breasts of its inhabitants those seeds of liberty which they never allowed to decay when it

France, in consequence of the redoubted ight, governor of the town, being more brave an learned, and outwitted by a cunning clerk to could read the letter of instructions which e warrior trusted him to interpret, and missecting his movements gave the advantage to a Guesclin. Bold, frank, and generous, the ochellois were always jealous of the safety of eir beloved town, and prudent in defending

The reformed religion had there fixed its ief hold, and the care of the Prince de Condé d rendered it almost impregnable; add to ich, the season of the year 1572, had been rticularly productive: the harvest and the stage had been abundant beyond all expecion, and not less than twenty-five thousand is of wine were placed in the cellars of the wn. From early morning till late at night, ggons and horses laden with immense stores provisions of every description were conantly crowding the streets, and thus La Roelle, which by sea could receive but few conniences, was victualled by land in a manner therto undreamed of in their hopes of plenty. be remarkable beauty and serenity of the eather permitted all sorts of necessary works go on, and reparations had been made in

the walls and fortifications to a great extent, the inhabitants volunteering to assist with their powers in so important a service, and the strangers residing amongst them being actuated by the same desire to preserve the total in its strength and security, and to render a capable of resisting the attacks with which it was likely to be threatened.

La Rochelle is situated in the most adultageous manner for commercial purposes, and its isles of Ré and Oleron, opposite its put form an immense roadstead, where vessels of great burthen can ride in safety in one of the finest harbours in Europe.

The Duke de Biron had sought by every wile which could be devised, to induce the Rochellois to listen to the deceitful professions of the King, whose treachery had been felt by all those towns which had imprudently put their trust in him. Not only had they indipnantly refused to obey the commands sent to them to admit the officers, called of justice, whose business it was to punish the supposed revolt of the Huguenots, but the bold Rechellois resolved to hold out to the last extremity, rather than expose themselves to the dangers which they felt were inevitable, should

stance, and as they heard that the de Montgomery had escaped the mas-Paris, and had, after great difficulties, Elizabeth's capital, they trusted that would promptly arrive by sea which nable them to sustain a prolonged siege their experience foresaw.

letters written at this period to the bis, and their replies, are singularly cud interesting. Charles and his mother their aid all the cunning and diplowhich they were possessed, in order we their cautious and determined submo met their arts with a candour and solution which foiled them at every conceiving that if they could seduce, they professions, the nobility of the town it, there would remain no persons of authority to direct the besieged, and them successfully to resist the King.

* MUNHEUR IN L'ANGUILLINE.

· Lare sent the Seigneur de Bion my own at La Bacterile to be its governor, u sanisi there my summands accordi the mich when have been issued. Bein immen that was no sujusting in the TWO ME THE THE INTERPOSES have not THE . IS WHEN SING DESIRE YOU TO retire to ! wat house, there is commert vourself and maner the nemeric of my said edicts. Wil i wa in I memi ani will that you said n' our imiv shall be maintained, gu uni meservett su that no displeasure what small be name at mu. But in case of your mering me community to leave the said to and received the inter of a subject, which y are to me. I miverine you that I shall h mu proceeded against and your goods sea lousing in vite as guilty of less-majesté.

The immer line of conduct will be said and most homograble for you to pursue, and must your wisdom and good knowledge of cause you to embrace and follow it. Projection. Monsieur de l'Anguillier, to have you in his keeping.

(Signed) "CHARLES"

The reply was conceived in the following terms:

the boldness to reply to it in order to an account both true and certain of my ments, since the fate which has overo many illustrious personages at Paris, fate appeared to be approaching me wn to town, from house to house, and he whole extent of the level country. herefore, for the security of my life, I fit to retire four leagues from my own e, seeking shelter from so impetuous est, not being able to persuade myself of which you have since made avowal. s avowal greatly increased the astoninto which I had been thrown, and appear to me dangerous to follow the of many of my friends, who would fain e remain in my own domain. terwards reached me, commanding the of all those who might have had any in the late tranhles this was followed





faith, and rather would I die a t than ever conform thereunto.

"Humbly, therefore, do I sup will consider it neither strange pass the rest of my days in a p word of that great God, by wh you reign, is purely set forth, I flourishes.

"There is, sire, no other cayou by that same God, which me from obeying all the commight please you to lay upon science is too powerful and too to be put aside. There is not gentleman, captain, or other subtregards the grandeur and prokingdom than myself, nor who faithful to the kings your pred you, since first I bore arms it And this same loyalty will I prestain your cause with as good head it shall please God to enlighter.

"I hereby humbly beg of the Lord God nat He will shortly bestow on you His grace, and grant you long life and felicity."

Many similar letters passed between the parties, with no other result than to confirm the Rochellois in their project of resistance, and to excite new attempts at deception on the part of the King.

When the brave La Nouë, therefore, in obelience to the commands he had received in Paris, presented himself before the deputies who were appointed to hear his proposals, he was listened to with sorrow and regret. Speaking in the conviction that he recommended only an advantageous mode of proceeding, he entreated them to obey the King, to admit the governor sent them, and to lay down their arms, promising that nothing should be required of them contrary to their honour. When his harangue was finished, one of the deputies stepped forward, and answered in these words:

"We consented to hold a parley on this ocasion, because we expected to have met the rave soldier La Nouë, from whom we felt ertain of hearing nothing derogatory or unorthy of him or us: but we see him not. It is to little purpose that the person who now addresses us resembles him in features; la Nouë's soul is not there, and we are condent that we listen but to an impostor."

"Look on me again," replied La Nou;
"do I deserve to be forgotten? Behold! I
have lost an arm in your service. Am I is
your ancient governor, attached to you by
every tie of feeling, and do you not owe is
both gratitude and affection?"

"We owe them to the dear and excellent friend whom you have named," said the deputy, "for he by his courage, experience, and produce defended our lives, and crowned himself with honour. But would he side with our form would he for any consideration lend himself to deceit? endeavour to inveigle us with fair promises? induce us to cast ourselves into the snares of those who have massacred our base and dearest friends? No, we cannot believe it; and we entreat you to withdraw, nor insult the name of that Bras de Fer, whom we love honour, and revere — for though you speak with his tongue, you counsel not with his heart."

This was more than the philosophy of the brave old soldier could endure.

"Enough!" cried he, "reproach me no more

have undertaken this embassy in the hope of commodating all differences. If I did not bethe professions made through me, I swear you that I had never uttered them; but welfare is my sole aim, and since you will attend to the words of friendship, believe them deceitful, what can I do but submit? If you receive me as a friend—may I once the enter your town, dedicate myself to your twice as before, and consult with those in hom you trust what will be the best method assisting you?"

A shout of joyful consent interrupted his trds; and, greatly to the annoyance of the tholic party, who had not reckoned on his tempromising honesty and real love for his government, Bras de Fer, as he was fallarly called, entered La Rochelle amidst acclamations of the delighted inhabitants to now looked confidently forward to success ad triumph.

Such was the situation of La Rochelle when the army of Biron and Strozzi was augmented by the arrival of an immense force, and all the royal princes of France joined the standard which threatened the devoted town. But, notwithstanding the strength brought against it, its natural capabilities of resistance, and the

resolute determination to hold out to the lest, of all its inhabitants, made the intended sees a work of no little anxiety.

An immense number of Huguenot gentlems, had flocked to its walls of refuge: despair, regret, revenge, indignation, and valour, acted variously on the citizens, and made every managed to an experienced soldier: the garmen was numerous, the commanders excellent, and the continued exhortations and encouraging and dresses of no less that fifty-five Protestate ministers, who had there sheltered themselves, from persecution, rendered them altogether, and most invincible. Day after day fresh arrivals of fugitives, escaped from the universal managed provided with provisions they had little in fear and all to hope.

The King of Poland, eager to distinguish himself again, as he had done at Jarnac and Moncontour, was resolved to conquer the obstinacy of the rebellious town, and looked proudly round on his gallant troops confident of victory. Francis of Anjou his brother, though attached to the chiefs of the Protestant party more than pleased his own, accompanied him. Henry of Navarre, his heart almost bursting with sorrow, shame, and indignation, which

eelings were shared by the Prince de Condé, as forced to obey the peremptory orders sent im to join the army, and was led rather as spectacle than expected to be of service on the occasion, except, inasmuch as his presence gainst his own people might injure him in their eyes.

Very different were the feelings of the Duke le Guise, and the Marquis de Mayenne his prother, who, chiefs in the late barbarous proceedings, saw only the gratification of their ambitious views, and a new field of glory open pefore them.

The frivolous and inert man of fashion, La Mole, had for a time cast off that character, and but for the foppishness of his appointments could scarcely have been recognised as the mere leader of the mode in Paris. When he arrived at the camp, he found to his infinite mortification, that the agitation and terror into which Alix had been thrown had caused her to be attacked with serious indisposition, and the physician who attended her declared that her life was in great danger. She received every care, and the strictest secrecy was necessarily beerved, as the presence of a female under the eculiar circumstances in which she was placed fould have caused the utmost scandal in the

camp; and La Mole was aware that if the instance of his folly and contempt of order were discovered, he should be visited with severe reprimands, and the object of his admiration would be at once taken from him.

While he was in this perplexity, and Alix was slowly recovering from her alarming state of illness. Claude arrived with his letters from the King, appointing him to a post near the person of La Mole. It had been arranged by Charles, that the better to deceive his intended victim. Marie Touchet should write also to him. as if unknown to her royal lover, recommending the young volunteer, by this means assuring him of a good reception, and creating a familiarity which would be likely to further the King's design; for Marie, terrified at the jest ousy which Charles had evinced, consented to save herself by sacrificing the lover, whom her encouragement and his own imprudence had betraved: she had no other means of satisfying the vindictive rival of La Mole, who, in his secret soul still suspected her, and as her own interest was her paramount consideration, she had little remorse in permitting the removal of one who had it in his power to confirm the King's suspicions, and whose vanity and want of principle made him a dangerous confidant

n to her letter beyond the mere appointf Claude, according to the orders of
ng, consequently his questions did not
ass his attendant as much as might
aturally been expected; and in a short
inding Claude a useful auxiliary, in a
r point of view, he became sensible that
gained a great acquisition, in the addihis establishment.

refined manners of La Mole soon won niration of Claude, and though he oblittle to excite his esteem, yet the native ness of the artful courtier being less into action in the camp than at Court, scaped his inexperienced mind which otherwise have disgusted him. Little aude aware what an enemy to his happe was regarding with an indulgent eye. the other hand, La Mole had become d to Claude. The simplicity of his s, joined to a fearlessness and independ-

over those, who wearied with enjoyment, wat constantly for change to recruit their exhaust senses.

On one occasion, when Claude was in attention ance on him, he bade him draw near, and lists to a communication which he had resolved to make, trusting that his zeal and prudence would prove him worthy of the confidence reposed in him.

"There is," said he, smiling, "a prisone is my power whom sickness has reduced to green extremity. The patient is now, I am informal, in a state of convalescence, and I am desires of paying a visit of congratulation on the conston; but as I would signify my intention I depute you to be my messenger."

"Your Lordship honours me," said Clauds, "may I inquire if the prisoner is of rank and lately taken?"

"The prisoner has been under my care as some time," answered La Mole. "I inquisitele about rank, but of beauty I am well convinced there is sufficient store."

"How, my Lord! beauty?" said Claude, prised.

"Yes," replied the courtier, "my prisons is a female."

Claude started. "Some unfortunate ladi,

and a noble."

ry," answered La Mole, laughing, "to nat is due to distressed damsels, but, as hitherto caused me little but alarmation, I am anxious to change the go, therefore, and bear to her my deha request to be permitted the honour, her fair hand."

en proceeded to inform Claude that be admitted to the prisoner, on preto the guard the ring which he deo him, and directed him to return ly as possible with the answer of the

e departed on his errand, and, having the tent indicated by La Mole, was d to that in which he was to behold id. He felt a depression of spirits, as red to himself some young wife or orn from her dearest connexions and

canvass was drawn aside and a lady entered her form entirely covered with a thick whi She stopped suddenly at the entrans and remained motionless without uttering word. Claude approached, and, in a low with delivered to her the message of La Mole, at ing a hope that her indisposition was remove The lady appeared to tremble violently, Claude had only time to spring forward t prevent her falling, when, seating her on low couch, he entreated her to be less agitates The lady inclined her head towards him as I bent to support her, and a sigh burst from be bosom; one pale hand she suffered him to in his, while with the other she drew aside veil, and he beheld what his bewildered imgination conceived to be the shade of Alice Amazement deprived him of utterance, and & hasty sign from her, as she carefully replaced her veil, convinced him of the necessity of # pressing the transports of his jov. scarcely recovered any degree of self-possessial when a female entered, and, advancing toward Alix, began to reprove her for having quitted her protection.

While she was speaking, Claude had remained almost in a state of stupor, unable to comprehend the circumstances under which is

Alix, at length he ventured to inquire lady had been long indisposed.

Since the fever left her," answered the dant, "her reason has been obscured.

ithout venturing another word Claude took eave, and, with a slow step and heavy heart, ned to the tent of La Mole, whom he d in some perturbation in consequence of result of a visit to the King of Poland, having obtained information relative to prisoner, had angrily insisted on her being ntly sent from the camp. When informed ne state in which his fair captive still reed, La Mole bit his lip and exclaimed, by did I expose myself to this dilemma the sake of a foolish girl, who gives me ing but uneasiness?' What can be done?" inued he, pacing the chamber; "there is way but to conceal her more closely, and out that she is sent back to Paris,"

Would it not be better, my Lord," said ide, endeavouring to speak without agita-, "really to let her return; her present ation admits but of little hope, and the isional violence of her paroxysms must renher concealment difficult."

Hold!" exclaimed the courtier, "I have some time suspected trickery in this busi-

ness, and am resolved myself to judge before I consent to part with my prize. To-morrow is fixed for an assault on the town: I have promised that to-night shall no longer find her in the camp; come, therefore, with me immediately, that my own eyes may witness if the beautiful maniac is so dreadful as she is represented."

Claude attempted, in vain, to dissuade him but he received only an order to be prepared to attend his will. Accordingly they left the tent, and with hasty steps advanced towards that part of the outskirts of the camp where Alix was concealed. Claude followed La Mole in a state of mind scarcely to be conceived. Already had they paused before the entrance of the tent, he could bear his feelings no longer, and had placed his hand on the mantle of la Mole to detain him, when the latter, turning hastily round to inquire his meaning, perceived a troop of horse riding at full speed towards them.

"We are attacked!" exclaimed he, drawing his sword; "there is not a moment to be losta sortie of the enemy!—to arms!"

As he spoke, he rushed back, and the words were soon echoed among the sentinels. In an instant the clash of arms was heard, and La le, forgetful of his purpose in his eagerness prevent a surprise, was soon lost to the sight Claude. An idea flashed on his mind,—What if, in the confusion, I could rescue ix? it is worth the risk of attempting, and en should we be seized by this party, we shall the taken as prisoners into the besieged ru." These thoughts followed each other idly, as he darted forwards and threw open tent, exclaiming, "The enemy—be on your ard!" and passing the sentinels, with the ickness of light, reached the inner chamber. It was leaning, apparently asleep, on a low the twith her attendant at her side. On his cupt entrance, the latter started up.

"Silence!—she sleeps," said she in a low

"The enemy," cried he, "are close upon us, fly, while yet you may."

The female uttered a loud cry, and her exmations roused the invalid, who found herself ready clasped in the arms of Claude, who had rown his mantle over her, and was bearing r from the apartment.

Without comprehending what was passing, t satisfied of his zeal in her service, Alix was me along by her lover, who passed the senel without question, as he supposed him to



norsemen who had caused the slackened their pace, and were few yards of the fugitives, whe claimed in a loud voice,—

"We resign ourselves your pri To his astonishment, however party halted, but continuing t brisk pace passed without bestow tion on his words. This was th ordinary, as Claude saw that they the dress and colours of the H The troop did not exceed a do their visit to the camp in so appeared inexplicable. All prop had been received but the day so much contempt by the Roch reported arrival of the Count d with sixty vessels, made it app that they should have consented Unable to solve the enigma, he uncertain course, still supportir

a few words of explanation. As he spoke, her bale countenance lighted up, and clasping her hands she fervently thanked him for her deliery; he interrupted her acknowledgments with tows of service, and anxious hopes for her future safety.

"I have been deceived in yonder troop," said e, "who I hoped might be the means of coneying us to La Rochelle. I tremble for you; ow can you support the fatigue and dangers thich await you?"

"Fear not for me," exclaimed Alix, with anination; "I did but feign weakness, and am trong and able to endure all since I am at berty once more. I can bear anything but eing in the power of that man."

Taking the hand which she extended to im, eagerly entreating that they should pursue neir journey, Claude led her through the little rood. Following a rugged path they soon rrived near what through the trees they hoped ras a hut, but discovered it to be a high cross, the foot of which was a carved image of St. Nicholas.

"There must be some cottage near," said claude, though much disconcerted at not findag an abode; "for this symbol is usually placed ear some village on the seacoast." They continued to advance, and at less at a short distance before them, they perote the roof of a cottage, half concealed in the wood, by which it was surrounded. With degree of alarm, they saw advancing to them a young man, who, when he per them, stopped, and in an abrupt mann manded their business.

"We are travellers," replied Claude, having missed our path, are desirous of shelter for a few hours."

The young man uttered an exclamate surprise "How!" cried he, "am I de or is it actually Claude Emars to wispeak!"

Claude at the same moment recogni the person before him, his friend Belcast to the no small relief of Alix she behe young student under whose protection al quitted the abbey of St. Germain des Pré

"Truly," exclaimed the student, "we n strange circumstances; and this is a bar and place for explanation; tell me at on you, as I suppose, fugitives like myself, may be able to serve you." In as few as possible Claude explained their situation

"Is it so?" said Belcastel, "I must, endeavour to provide for you as well a

f. Enter this hut with me, and when we note under shelter I will let you know my

ey followed him accordingly through a low vay, and found the hut uninhabited; carefastening the entrance with a rusted iron Belcastel conducted them through several rooms, to a flight of steps, and descendhey found themselves in a vaulted cave, I which were piled, or lay in confusion, empty casks, a circumstance that seemed dicate its having been the abode of smug-, who then, as in latter times, abounded ne coast.

eleastel informed Alix, that when he so ptly quitted her in the crowd to assist companions, he had entered into a violent tention with those sent against them; that, r a severe struggle, his party had been powered, and he amongst the rest taken oner.

We were," said he, "hurried off to the ons belonging to the Abbey; and consider-the tender mercies others had received I fess I did not expect to escape easily, and surprised, after some days' confinement, to ive an order for my departure, and my ishment mitigated to banishment. I was

commanded to quit Paris instantly, on pain of death, and was left to choose my road, which I discovered to be the case with many of wifellow students, who, like me, were not native of the capital. We resolved to join our small aid to assist the Rochellois,—in fine, our party is now only waiting a fitting opportunity to make their wishes known to the besieged."

Claude eagerly inquired their number, and learned that it amounted to thirteen.

"We conceal ourselves separately," said Belcastel, "for fear of drawing attention to our numbers; and we find this wood so proper for our purpose, that I, who am named chief of the band, feel myself another Robert le Diable, able to contend with the whole world."

Claude recounted their meeting with the party which had caused so much alarm in the camp and when he mentioned the report of Montgomery's arrival with succours, Belcastel's joy knew no bounds.

"This is indeed good news," exclaimed he, "although I fear there has been scarcely time; however, we will hope the best. What that troop might be, I cannot imagine; but there may be treachery, for I know several of the adverse party have employed spies. Meantime, I am most fortunate in gaining you so

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ally, and in affording protection to this

While he spoke, a signal was heard, and one time different members of the band arrived, brder to consult as to their future move-tes; they welcomed Claude, who was known everal, with much cordiality.

We must wait for the arrival of Philippe,"

Belcastel; "doubtless he will be here to
th, and the intelligence he may have pro
ted, can direct us; meantime, let us beguile

time in relating to our new companion our

tapes and the perils we have encountered."



CHAPTER XI.

DIFFICULTIES.

Are you content To make a virtue of necessity And live, as we do, in this wild

"Come, Mathurin," said Beld hear the remainder of your story, be glad to know what became of Cordelier, who was rescued by impertinence on a late occasion little thought, any more than our was."

"Yes," said Mathurin, "and not aware either that the man saved from the boatmen, and wh the river, was the same." ed the other side of the river, he made est of his way to the Rue St. Jacques, and straight to our house. We were very glad him; for my wife had suffered much fear account, as we more than suspected him a Huguenot.

it is lucky,' said Clarice, 'that you have gain appeared in your monk's frock; for, the butcher, has been here, making inquiries after you, and we had some e to get him away.'

My good friends,' said our lodger, 'it is a any longer to attempt concealment: I ne of those marked out for destruction, just escape as well as I can. I will but some papers from my room above, and id you farewell.'

le hurried up-stairs, and was scarcely gone, a tap at our door startled my wife, who rown very timid.

If this should be an enemy,' said she, 'to

moneyer: for he was always hovering about a seek to make love to her, —a deformed that before we were married.

the new same has a Madame Lusson, yet make so same make committable here, that on annex to see to the party. Will you give to a transport of women for I am tired to death?"

*Clarities with throught it best to be oil, measured by bearing him a draught; and we saw, with great unmeasures that our troublement magnitude mountains to pay us a long visit, for several himself quite as one of the family, and began to talk.

This is a sai cusiness,' said he. 'My heat hiereis for these poor people; for, though the tree Himmeness and heretics, still, you know, they are desh and blood, and Frenchmen I have saved several with my own hand, as would mere, if I could find an opportunity. I am told there are a good many concealed about since the massacre began; and indeed to tal truth, my good friends, that Cordelier whom you harbour is a suspected character; and I admit you to make a friend of me, and tell me if he is in the house now, that we may get him swe,—for you will scarcely be safe if Captain Cruf finds him.'

"I was taken in, for the moment, by the little

patch's plausible manner, and was on the late of speaking the truth; but Clarice interlated, and replied:—

ger: for these three days there has been no back his convent at Lyons.'

That his story, was it? No such thing. He is a leguenot; and more,—I know who he is,—I ther more nor less than the Count de Montanery, who killed King Henry in the tournament. Now the Queen-mother will give a reard of a hundred gold crowns to whoever will liver him up; and he is, therefore, not very lely to escape. You and I, Lussaut, added ugly hypocrite, 'are above a bribe; but wouldn't say as much for Crucé, though he is friend: and if he should suspect—'

is "Suppose he should,' interrupted Clarice, itaking loud—for she heard the step of our integer on the stair, 'he would not find him bere, for the reason I told you; and as for being the Count de Montgomery, he is too pood a Catholic,—for the whole floor where he leeps is covered with bits of the rod with rhich he flogs himself every morning.'

"The dwarf grinned. 'Who,' said he sud-

denly, 'was the man that entered your shot now? I thought it was the tiler Edmond Montault told me he wanted some slates and on the roof of his house.'

"'No,' said Clarice, carelessly fillinglass; 'it was Petit Jacques, who is commy mules to mend.'

"'Indeed,' said Ancelin; 'then I wi till he comes down, since he is worki stairs in your house; for I saw h up.'

"This resolve greatly disconcerted us, saw the deceitful wretch had some de his pertinacity. However, Clarice mad sign to attract his attention while s the room, and, hurrying up-stairs, m lodger, who was descending. She ba return, and then told him of her fears. whom he was taken. He assured her he be on his guard; that he would sell dear, that he was indeed Montgomery, a not fear to trust her with the secret, in s the reward offered for betraying him. bade him rely on her presence of mind, a to stir till she let him know the dwarf wa but that did not seem a thing likely s happen; for he stayed and stayed till

ine was drunk, and getting rather heated he gan to show his real intentions.

"" Now, Lussaut,' said he, 'there is no use in pur trying to hide the truth; and, after all, mee a man has to make his fortune in this cked world, it matters little how he does it. hundred gold cronws are worth having; and we could find this Huguenot, we were sure it, and might share it between us without aking Crucé the wiser.'

"I felt inclined to knock the treacherous llain on the head; but Clarice was more pruent, and, before I could speak, she answered,—"Well,—but how are we to get at him? I ell you he has been away these three days."

He is up-stairs at this moment,' said the burf; 'Petit Jacques is in his shop busy at ork, never dreaming of you and your high leels. Let me go up softly and seize him; give me some rope, and between us we can bind him fast till I give information. We will shut the door of the shop; you, Clarice, can watch in case Crucé should arrive, and amuse him if he loes.'

"Seeing that there was no help for it, I prended to enter into the scheme, stipulating r half the reward, which Ancelin readily promised, then, taking some cord, I led the up the narrow stairs to the room where lodger lay. I knew he was a powerful t and with my help I was sure we could = the dwarf, and he might escape. Accord as we entered, I closed the door in hasta before Ancelin had time to turn round, I him, and, calling to the Count, told him the matter stood, and bade him help to and bind the little wretch, and then fly f life. This we effected, but with great culty, as he was strong and furious and great resistance; however, at last, he was ly bound, and we fastened him to a pil wood, which supported the roof, and down we went. The Count loaded us with t and gave us his purse and a valuable r spite of our remonstrances.

"'I shall endeavour to reach the coast he, 'and fly, if possible, to England. It you suffer persecution on my account, I Rochelle be your refuge, where I trust to return. Farewell, and Heaven be with

"We thought all was now safe, but, j Clarice was opening the door, to our we saw the figure of Crucé close before us

"' Well met!' said he; 'have you see dwarf Ancelin?' "'He is just gone,' replied Clarice, quickly, to the Bel Image; and left word that he would meet you there, as he had something of consemence to inform you of.'

"" Who are you, comrade?" asked the butcher our lodger, who had kept in the shade, why don't you come forward? If you are an onest man and a good Catholic, there's plenty work to do yet, and the pestilent Huguenots sarm still."

"We saw that the ruffian was suspicious, and larice had need of all her wit. 'He's deaf,' aid she, 'never heed him, he hears you not; he neelin will be impatient till you come; he old me to let you know he waits. Here Jean,' he added, handing the Count a pitcher, and reaking very loud, 'take this and go to the funtain, and mind you make haste back.'

"Our lodger took the pitcher and was hurrying past Crucé, when he laid his great heavy hand on his shoulder and detained him.

"'Stop, mon drôle!' he cried, grinning as he spoke; 'you depart not before I look in your face; a hundred gold crowns shall not so easily slip through my fingers.'

"In an instant the Count shook off his hold, and drawing a pistol from his girdle, fired it at the butcher. As quickly he lifted his arm to dash it on one side, and received the discharge in his shoulder; in spite of which, he grappled with Montgomery, and they struggled hand while Crucé exerted his tremendous voice caling for his friends without. The Count was close to the door which Clarice held open. attempted to force myself between the butcher and his intended victim, who, with a violent effort, dashed him to the earth and sprang into At that moment a party came the street. running towards us with drawn swords, streaming with blood: I saw there was nothing to be done, but to escape with my wife. I darted out, bidding her follow me, which she did shutting the door on Crucé, who lay stunned against the wall within. The Count, making us a sign, rushed down the first opening, and we lost him in a moment. I hurried on, crying out loudly, - Who will gain a hundred gold crowns? The Count de Montgomery is it yonder house, bound above, - hasten, or you will be too late.

"This was enough; the miscreants rushed for ward,—I saw them enter my shop, and felt ou lives were all that we could hope to save Therefore, almost carrying my poor wife, on went as fast as I could run, leaving my property to chance. hope was to reach the Quai de la d the Hôtel d'Hercule, where Marion, aunt, lived with Nantouillet the and we thought we could get help and soldiers to protect my poor shop, ot too late.

went along, suddenly a cavalcade of ladies and gallants came riding by; we were trying to avoid them, we saw t walking along before us. He seemland agitated, and when he looked aw the party he suddenly took to and ran off as fast as we did. I of the ladies, who was very handsome looking, say to one of the cavaliers, t knave Nantouillet! It would be a to ride over the miserly craven!' ed and applauded, and, to our disfierce horsewoman dashed the spurs teed's sides, and directed him right e Prêvôt,—calling out as she did

of the way, saucy groom? Leave the for your betters!'

ing she rode furiously forward. The s thrown down in an instant beneath s feet, and she dashed on, laughing eing joined by her companions, who all followed, allowing me hardly time to drag unfortunate man out of the road.*

"'Alas!' said Nantouillet, when he speak 'this is the vengeance of that Chateauneuf! I must fly from Paris; the no safety here for me now.'

"' Are you hurt, sir?' I inquired.

"'Much bruised,' said he; 'but I can my house is only a few steps from hence for your timely aid I had been minced by horses' feet. I thought they had done er when they pillaged my hotel and dest my goods!'

"We led him to the hotel, which we a scene of desolation impossible to desceverything torn to pieces, the doors and dows off their hinges, the arras hanging in and the walls broken and defaced. He note to us the event, which you all know of Feast of the Three Kings, which had cosso dear, and when I recounted my misa ture he offered us his protection as fellow ferers. He sent to the other authorities ordered some troops to go to the Ru Jacques, as there had been strict orders it anew, that the Huguenots were not to be lested further; but, alas! my shop had

^{*} On record.

irely pillaged-everything was gone; they nd the mob in possession, and sitting on the dow-sill above, enjoying the devastation, the little dwarf Ancelin, his crooked legs gling down, and his frightful face distorted h laughter as he pelted the soldiers with of wood, which he had found in my nge, where he had been bound. I rejoice to however, that he met his fate; for one of men, irritated at the insolence he displayed, finding that there was no other way to disse the crowd, fired amongst them, and takaim at the dwarf as he sat gibbering there, ight him down a corpse to the pavement. at became of Crucé I have no idea; all I w is, that, finding myself a ruined man I epted Nantouillet's offer, and with Clarice Marion accompanied him to Normandy, leaving my wife in the care of her aunt, esolved to join the malcontents, as we Cathowho have been ill-treated, and ask for reess, are called. Why we should be otherwise in ill-content, I know not; and as the Huenots have a common cause with us, I joined is band of gentlemen, and shall be glad ough when we can reach La Rochelle, and rin to show our enemies what men can do o have wrongs to revenge and wives to tect."

"And where," said Belcastel, "is Nantoulle now?"

"In Normandy," returned Lussaut; "ssfe, hope; but a poor man to what he was. It will never be fond of fine Court-gallants again as he once was, for they have ruined him triely."

"His nephew Philippe will be here anonsaid Belcastel; "he was forced to fly with a and is now one of our most useful spies;surely, I hear his signal."

As he spoke, a low whistle was heard. So lence was instantly established, and a voice without demanded admission in the name of St. Nicholas, for a wayfarer bewildered in his journey. Belcastel smiled, and hastening up the steps of the cave he opened the door was an aged man, whom he ushered into the cottage with much precaution; he was immediately presented to Claude and Alix, as Philippetheir trusty spy, who could, doubtless, give the latest tidings from the camp.

"I can," answered his companion; "for I have but now parted with the Duke of Anjou himself, and in my character of astrologer have learned much more than I have taught; though my predictions have given so much satisfaction that Ruggieri himself, or even the prince of

ophets, Nostrodamus, could not have been ore honoured. Our common purse has been ell filled in consequence, and we must now adeavour as quickly as possible to give intelgence to our friends the Rochellois. There a project on foot to destroy the pipes leadng to the great fountain in the town, and here are even wretches who have proposed to oison the water: this ought to be known withut delay, as it is of the utmost consequence nat measures should be taken to prevent it. atelligence has just been received in the camp the state of La Rochelle through a spy who ad been imprudently admitted into the town, nd who has found means to evade the vigince of La Nouë. I met him and a party but ow, hurrying to carry their information where would be welcome. His name is Thibauerie, a traitor Huguenot, who, won by gold, is betrayed his friends. Fortunately, the saltarshes, where no cannon can be placed, greatguard the besieged; if they could but reive succour by sea all would be right, but fear greatly the success of Montgomery's treaties. He is, however, arrived in England d may do much."

"Thank Heaven for that good news!" eximed several of the party.

"Elizabeth of England, unluckily," con Philippe; "seems but lukewarm in our fand the Catholic party exult in the hop her policy will keep her quiet. The moportant intelligence I have, however, is tassault is to be made to-morrow on the We have no time to lose, and had better a to enter La Rochelle before morning, we can give warning of the intention, we do good service. But though your Claude, here," continued the speaker, serve us in good stead, what is to be do the lady?"

"Let me accompany you," exclaimed "for pity's sake! I have no fears whi make me a troublesome companion; a strength will enable me to endure all fa so I but escape from the foes I leave I have relations in La Rochelle, and may be enabled to be of use. My uncl. Hommet." She was interrupted by an extion from Belcastel, whose cheek and brosuffused with crimson, as he turned a propose some arrangement for their in expedition.

It was agreed that they should sally to a body from the wood under favour of the and make for the river side, Belcastel the opposite shore, they must bend their the opposite shore, they must bend their enter the town by that way. However untain and hazardous the adventure, they had alternative, and all being hastily arranged, lix, supported by Claude, walked in the centre the small band, and they began their march.

The night was very dark, and with the utost difficulty they pursued their way till the nks of the river were gained. Here an unought-of obstacle presented itself: the stream as not deep, and their only means of passing as by fording it, a method little difficult to Soung adventurers, determined as they were, and most of them accustomed to a hardy life mong their native torrents and mountains; but For Alix this was impossible, and Claude heard their consultations almost with despair. Alix berself, seeing the predicament in which they were placed, exerted all her resolution, and in a firm voice bade them not consider her as a burthen on their undertaking, as with the as-Sistance of Claude, whose further protection she entreated, she hoped to be able to reach the opposite bank without attempting the mode they would adopt. She knew the country perfectly, having visited her uncle there, and proposed Claude's assuming the habit of the tended astrologer, who had lately been seessful in the camp, and she would accombine as an attendant. Her advice was out delay followed, and the transformation Claude soon completed. He received from the student a volume of the centuries of it damus, and several hints as to the proper of sustaining his character.

Alix bound her white veil in many round her head in the form of a turbal covered her face with it as much as p. The large mantle she wore concealed her and, thus equipped, they took their way ther along the river side, having agreed signal of recognition, and that the othe should wait for them as long as their would permit, when the passage had be complished.

The night was far advanced when Ali Claude reached the foot of the bridge being challenged by the sentinel, Claus nounced himself as a poor professor of ma and astrology, travelling with his daugh visit a sick relation at Marans.

"You have a dark night for your jou said the sentinel, "and a cursed country through." "We mediciners must not consider that," reed Claude: "we go in all weathers and
rough all dangers to visit the sick. I have
me some leagues already, for I left the camp
a morning, where I did not like to leave my
ughter, so I brought her with me; and it is a
g tramp for her: would you let us rest awhile
this hut, for we are footsore?"

No," said the sentinel, "you can't stop e. My relief will soon come, I hope; and I st not be seen parleying, — what's the news the camp? Are we to attack these heresoon, or cool our heels outside the town till ameday?"

I hear," said Claude, "there is to be an ack to-morrow; and as the besieged have no it of such a thing, we are sure to take their try town at the first assault."

Stop," said the sentinel, who seemed anxisto amuse his solitude by a little gossip; have you seen Mitaine and Frezaie?* Oh! the glorious guns! They have only to look at he walls once, and the next glance they will be hown in the air. It does one's heart good to ear Frezaie screech! she is the sweetest vixen a ever saw. Now, some think her not equal

Two cannons so called by the soldiery at the period.
e is described as having a double barrel.

to Mitaine; but, though she has a doub rel, her noise isn't so loud or so fine, mind."

"We are well provided with pieces. Claude confidentially. "Now, how mayou think we have?"

"Why, I heard but now," returned the dier, "Biron has just received thirty-six for the battery, three hundred thousand of powder; and to-day the foot and cavexpects must be come."

"Oh, they are! they are!" said Claud ous to put an end to the colloquy, yet for appearing in haste to leave the spotgood night, comrade. I wish we had yo instead of this long dark walk before us-

"You need not envy me: it is solitary here," returned the sentinel. "I wish with the party who are gone to the a La Grimenaudière to-night, that old he the road-side, you know."

"St. Nicholas defend us!" said Claud ing alarm: "that is just in our route. send we meet them not! Who defends house?"

"Why, as for that, Captain Virolet tled to betray it to us; but, if that r fool, Le Normand, arrives, he will try t

mation, took leave of the soldier; and ating himself and his trembling companeir good fortune, continued their way. n began to rise, and they found less in proceeding; but the nature of the ras so peculiar that they feared the iation from the high track they were might involve them in danger. on every side stretched beneath them ; of marsh, intersected by canals, cut ge, and for the transport of wood and researies from one place to another. season had been dry they were less s than usual; but, to persons unacwith the country they presented a e appearance; and it was with unexelight that they beheld, after several of toilsome exertion, the towers of La at no great distance.

were beginning to congratulate each their good fortune, when the sound of

shroud them till the party pa had, however, scarcely time to c voices of the men came distinctl

"What is the use of further one sullenly. "I like not seek sessed, when the night is so have done enough in scouring the sundown."

"But what becomes of the another. "The Count will give whoever brings her back, and that finds his truant page, wh bewitched."

"Ay," answered the first, "t enough at this time; and I ta consequence of the pestilent Hu harbour in our camp; whom the confound!"

As he uttered this comfortal whole party halted close by th the fugitives were concealed; an ing began to arrange the fur aker, "how poor Pierre Clement was served w three nights ago? I had it from one that him when he was possessed. Pierre was nking, and playing at dice at the sign of Red Horse, at old Laurent's, and had lost nost all his money. He threw his last stake, d lost again: then he fell to swearing, and shed the devil would send him ten crowns to on with. There started up a tall blackoking man from the other end of the room, ho had been seen by no one before, and cemed as though he had come out of the arras, where St. Anthony was contending with the vil one. This man came up to Pierre, and ande him be content, for that he would lend im ten crowns, and wished him luck into the argain. Pierre, nothing doubting, took his offer, and in a few throws all was gone. Well, he black man offers him more, and whispers omething in his ear. He was mad at his ill ortune, and, besides, had drunk a good deal: o he jumps up, and swearing that he would ever give up for man nor fiend, grasps the lack man's hand, who throws on the table a pag of gold. Now they who were playing, doubting who was Pierre's assistant, refused to on, when the devil suddenly transformed himself into a long serpent, and took possession of poor Pierre by leaping down his three.

This was seen by all present; and from the time he has been in the power of the demonstrating, and tearing his hair, and crying it a manner terrible to hear."

The relater of this wonderful history leaning over the back of his horse, almost an of his own eloquent account, and listened with wonder and awe, when the moon sudden broke from a dark cloud, and cast a bi gleam on the green sward where Claude Alix were hidden and impatient hearers. In moment the glare grew stronger, and they convinced that the friendly shadow was diminishing. Alix instinctively drew near Claude, who, covering her white turben his mantle, waited in feverish anxiety the clusion of the scene. The slight move of Alix had not escaped the notice of one the party, whose senses, excited by the many lous relation he had just heard, occasioned hearing to be peculiarly acute.

"What moved yonder?" said he to his companions; "methought I saw something with glide along—just by—"

[&]quot;Oh!" answered another, in a sneering took

^{*} See Copie d'une Lettre au Sieur de la Bonde, à (*) léans, 1578, and Démonomanie des Sorciers.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

is perhaps, the serpent that so nimbly leapt in Pierre's throat,—we had better move our letters before he attacks one of us."

How!" said the narrator of the wonderful at, "do you doubt my word? do you dare redit what I know to be true?"

None but cowards and fools credit such tes," replied the other.

None but Huguenots and heretics disbethem," retorted his comrade; "you may well sneer at the blessed legend of St. Shin, who disputed with the devil for the woman's soul, and threw seven on the dice the assistance of Heaven, though Satan had wwn six and thought himself sure of his

No more!" exclaimed he who was evitly the leader of the party, "to horse! pursue the devil no farther; the night is spent, and we shall have work enough by break."

So saying, they remounted and were riding when the horse of one of the troop sudly refused to pass the thicket where lay fugitives; he snorted and reared, and in the of all his master's attempts continued to

m 2

[•] See a picture in the Abbey of St. Guilain near Mons spreaenting this miracle.

back. The others were now at some distant and the soldier, enraged at the resistance of the beast, was spurring him violently, when as he turned the corner of the road, the moornight disclosed to his view the reason of the animal's alarm. At the same moment he uttered a loud shout, and Claude, starting from his concealment, stood on the defensive. "Fly Alix!" said he, in a low tone, "fly to the wood our friends may be near."

With the rapidity of an arrow she dares away, terror and hope giving her strength. The soldier in the meantime discharged his petronel, but the ball flew wide of the mark; the report, however, reaching the company in advance, they galloped back at the moment that, Claude having succeeded in dismounting him, they were engaged in a violent struggle. He was soon surrounded, but refusing to yield, continued to defend himself in the unequal conflict, rendered desperate with the recollection of having again lost Alix; but at length he was overpowered and pinioned.

"Who are you?" asked the leader; "as what is your business here?"

"My intentions," said Claude, "were n to offer you injury, and you have no rig to impede me in my way." "Where were you journeying," said he who ad discovered him, "when you hid yourself behind yonder bush with a strange companion ho has escaped? Are you a conjuror or robber, what is your calling?" added he, as he examined the robe in which Claude was rapped. Remembering the character he had sustain, Claude answered by repeating the examined at the bridge, leaving out, however, he circumstance of his daughter being his companion.

"Oh ho!" cried the soldier, "you are a magician; truly your spirits do you good service in a rencontre; but who or what was it led away so fast but now?"

"Ask not!" said Claude in a mysterious tone;
there are to whom the great secrets must not
be revealed; but, mark me, I am served by
those who can revenge me, and against whom
an arm of flesh can do little: beware how you
disturb their ire!"

As he had hoped, knowing the superstition of the soldiery, a shudder seemed to run through the troop: they nevertheless began to secure their prisoner, who endeavoured as much as possible to detain them by his resistance. The bright moonlight, which had betrayed the fugi-

tives, had given place to a deep gloom. The soldiers were busied in binding Claude on our of their horses, and had already commenced their return, when a loud burst of thunder startled them, and at the same instant a low whistle reached the ear of Claude, which he easily recognised as the signal of the students A violent storm of wind and rain succeeded and the increasing darkness prevented the silent approach of Belcastel and his comrades from being observed, till the soldiers found themselve suddenly attacked on all sides, and to the surprise of Claude several musket-shots were discharged at the enemy, whose terror was equal to their astonishment as the idea of supernatural agency pressed on their imaginations. One of two of the number defended themselves, and endeavoured to inspire confidence in their companions; but the panic was so great that, after a short contention, they put spurs to their horses and galloped off, pursued by the yells and shouts of the assailants, who, having caught from Claude the hint of their superstitious fears, endeavoured by every means to add to their alarm and continue the delusion.

Claude was greatly surprised to find that the party of Belcastel was increased by a smal body of soldiers; this explained the firing, for peared that the students, after fording the liver, had continued their way for some time on the route to La Rochelle, when their ears were uddenly saluted with the sound of fire-arms, and unable to repress their curiosity, and oping also that they might fall in with some econnoitering party, they made towards the spot, and witnessed a scene of contention between the two parties of Huguenots and Catholics for hich they were unprepared.

The Rochellois had disposed troops at difrent places round about their town, a few agues off, and these were continually being tacked by the enemy. On the night in queson, the gallant Le Normand was proceeding ith a small body of men towards Marans, hen he received notice from La Musse, the aptain who commanded at Noaillé, a place not far distant, that he had been forced to bandon that post, with a recommendation to teturn to La Rochelle. This he was, however, unwilling to do, and, hoping to assist his friend, advanced in spite of the darkness of the night, when, finding the enemy closer than he expected, they were obliged to throw themselves into a château of some strength, defended by a

troop, and a very snort time the place was surrounded and gle ensued: the draw-bridge dently by the contrivance of house, and the enemy, findi trance, after a valiant resista gain possession, taking Viro prisoners, while Le Norman men, disputing every inch of to fight their way out, when the the band of students, whose unknown, caused their assailar and the gallant party foun safety, but mortified and ann assistance rendered them by surrendered without scarcely The students made known t related the situation of the n met and her protector, and t proceeded, hoping to fall in v

his men, not only as friends, but with grateacknowledgments for the assistance chance ad enabled them to render. Some caution, owever, was necessary, and after a brief exaination the large party was detained awhile at he gates till the captain could give informaon of their circumstances. Alix proposed to stablish the truth of their statement by repairig immediately with Claude only, accompaied by a sufficient guard, to the house of De lommet, who held a post of importance in the agistracy. Her request was agreed to, and ith as little delay as possible she proceeded execute her commission. The astonishment f her uncle on beholding her was only equald by the delight of her cousin Lesselline. As riefly as possible she related her situation, and aiming the protection of his roof for herself d her deliverer, she entreated his interferice to secure the good reception of her friends e students by the citizens of La Rochelle.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FABLE.

A fine volley of words, gentlemen, and quickly s Shars

The report which so much encourage Rochellois, that a fleet was arriving from land to assist them, under the conduct Count de Montgomery, was unfortunate true. With incredible difficulty he had ed the coast, and crossed the sea in an boat to Dover; but his hopes were damped on his arrival, for he found that abeth was extremely anxious to preser peace of the two countries, and was but warm in her expressed indignation at a cent cruelties practised in France on the testants.

Contrary to her usual professions, the appeared to have set her mind on conclutreaty of marriage proposed for her wind Duke d'Alençon, now, in consequence of ther's appointment to the kingdom of I

lled the Duke d'Anjou. Although the Prince as twenty-one years younger than his prosed bride, and was far from possessing claims that personal beauty which she so much adired, yet she appeared determined to make m her husband, and heard with indignation d anger all remonstrances on the subject. ne news of the frightful events which had at occurred had for a time put a stop to the estion, and the horror and disgust of the ople of England were so openly avowed, that r ministers, supported by the French Protestts, to whom the Duke was believed to be endly, were obliged to let it sleep for the esent, much to the annoyance of the Queen, o, on this occasion, appeared to have thrown de her usual prudence and good sense, and have abandoned herself to a foolish and imanary passion, which she was resolved at all ks should not be opposed.

The persecuted Huguenots had fled in great mbers to England, and Montgomery found difficulty in collecting either men or money assist him. In Plymouth and Falmouth he d secured a numerous fleet ready to act, if could procure a ratification of the promises ld out to him by the English Council; but lay after delay kept him in continued agitastill no positive permission was

While things remained in thi beth had despatched the Earl of Paris, to stand proxy for her to of Charles IX, and it had been at that the young Duke should princognito. This it was said has and numerous were the stories specting the interviews, which satisfactory to both parties, the were entertained by the people ject of giving them a Catholic succeed.

Meantime the mind of Cath dicis was harassed by contending of troubles seemed to be tossing and she saw that it required all to stem the torrent. To pacify amuse the Queen, and gain her her first consideration. The experience of the content of the cather than the consideration.

lous measure, which she saw the necessity woiding. At the same time, so great was hatred towards the Protestants, and so end was she on finding that the Count de atgomery had effected his escape, and was preparing assistance for the revolted Rolois, that she resolved to fix on some notascheme, which should strike a great blow in land, where she held intelligence with a og Catholic party, who assured her that people in general, and the greater part of nobles, would gladly receive Mary Stuart heir Queen, if Elizabeth could be removed. perine had frequently reflected on the words th René had dropped; and she began to k it possible to act upon them. She sumed, therefore, her favourite counsellor and creature of her will, the Marshal de Retz: the result of her consultation was, that he ild be sent ambassador to Queen Elizabeth negociate a loan, and to prevent succours g given to those of La Rochelle by every ns in the power of flattery, falsehood, and chery to effect.

he Duke de Retz was a man eminently d for such a purpose. Of low birth and nous character, his talents had raised him his present rank, together with his entire

unscrupulous policy exactly sui "Go, then, De Retz," said your appointments be such a dignity and to dazzle the eyes islanders; and be careful to p to cajole the vain woman wh superior cunning to outwit h foible is vanity,-be it your ca believe that she is adored in reputation of her beauty has 1 siastic feeling in her favour; Anjou is dying for her love, an myself desire her alliance beyon siderations. She is rich, and h obtained for our necessities; pride so as to prevent her liste presentations of De Lorges to help La Rochelle. There are noblemen who will be ready t any plan for her downfall; and I sleep of that attack on the Ear vessels, in his voyage to France. the treasure which Worcester brought is a present. Bianco shall accompany you, ou will find his wit of infinite service. To not him I leave the whole business, and not but I shall hail your success, as I always hitherto done, in any great emeralways hi

be done as your wisdom has directed, nere is no reason to dread failure, while such heads as your Grace's, René's and vn, are busy planning for the good of e."

soon as De Retz was dismissed the ordered Bianco to her presence, and inl him of her intentions.

adonna," said he "I undertake the task reat readiness. Is not this Queen of ad proud of her riding?"

e is," said Catherine; "but why the ques-

"It would be well," said René, smiling, "to present her with a saddle of extraordinary beauty,—the leather and linings carefully embroidered under my directions. We will make it gorgeous to sight, and convenient beyond all her savage workmen can accomplish. If she uses it frequently, her health may probably feel a change,—for the better, as regards our cause."

Catherine's countenance expressed her satisfaction as she commended the quickness of his invention.

"I have several friends whom I can trust," he continued, "who had better accompany me; some whom your Grace has known of old; and there is one who would fain be employed again in your service. He is but lately returned to Paris, after a long absence, and did good service in the late business."

"Who is it?" said Catherine. "I want faithful servants, and will reward them."

"He is one whom your Grace will remember by this token," said René, producing a ring, which he gave her.

Catherine's face became pale as ashes as she gazed upon the jewel, and sinking back in her seat, she gasped for breath. René watched her with some surprise, and saw her features workwith suppressed agony. She looked several es at the ring, and at length uttered, in an ated voice, —

René,—is he who gave you this in Paris?"
Yes, madonna," he replied; "it is Captain
rio, who tells me your Grace employed him
ry years since, and he trusts again to serve

Does he demand to see me?" said Cathein a subdued voice.

He entreats it," replied René.

Strange!" said Catherine: "then he still
! I heard he was condemned to the galleys
some discovered deed."

Even so," replied her confidant; "but he ped most miraculously; and since then,—he is very pious,—he has for some years I a life of seclusion as a hermit in Auvergne, tising the greatest austerities and setting example to the whole district. By degrees e of his old associates found him out, and persuaded several more to join in his mode of till at length, a rich merchant passing the hermitage begged shelter for the t; and the sight of his jewels, bales, and filled purse, overcame the philosophy of holy men, and they transferred those treates to their own possession,—providing the

respectable ex-owner with a decent dwelling beneath the flooring of their cell. As he was now well stored, he and his companions resolved to seek a wider field for their zeal and benevolence; and quitting the scene of their pious choice, visited some of the most celebrated cities of Europe, and finally arrived in Paris, where I renewed my acquaintance with them; and Florio has intrusted me with this to revive your Grace's ancient consideration of him. He it was who informed me that the Count de Montgomery was to be found here in disguise; and he had nearly accomplished the purpose we have at heart to remove him from your path, but his star triumphed and he escaped."

"Would that I could annihilate his whole race with himself!" exclaimed Catherine; "but he has sons;—the line stretches on;—why did they not all perish, like his first-born? I tell you, René, all I ever hoped and sought is not thing if I behold not that man at my feet, if I see not that traitor's head roll on the scaffold. I would not have him die by ordinary means; I would enjoy the triumph, after years of disappointment, of knowing that he perished by the hand of the executioner,—his name and fame blasted, and his race outcasts and beggars!"

"Madonna," said René, "be of good cheer;

in your fate. It is decreed that you ee this. The stars that speak to me ight of you, reveal that when the crown and is exchanged for that of France, omery's blood shall flow; but there is which must be paid for this—"

me it, Bianco," cried the Queen; "what to large for such combined happiness?"

Henry reigns he will be the last of his aid Bianco, mysteriously.

erine shuddered. "And Navarre suc'asked she, as if she consulted an oracle.
varre is not immortal," suggested René.
rguerite lives, he cannot break his marith her; they must continue foes and
it as such, and we have yet time before
ontend with fortune."

ne, René," said she; "Henry of Nas volatile, and loves not my daughter; no fear of that. Charles withers daily ust be careful of him—"she added the ds in a low whisper with a significant which René understood. "But to the I will see Florio; you shall yourduct him at midnight to my observator by the private way, and we will eak of all that it is requisite to do in

tress?

The brow of René lowered and I cannot discover the least the President has retired to him Anjou, with a heart bleedifor his child's loss; my rival would I could discover how! means, madonna, to put me favour? it would much assist o I nearer to him."

"I will contrive it, René,"
gent mistress, "depend on n
as whimsical as he is passion
appear for a time out of my
take you into his; we will se
hour of audience is arrived—
coming—let all guests be ad
Montgaillard was to visit us
adventure it will be diverting t
Ruggieri is to attend me: the

eerfulness and gaiety, and Catherine, to out-

The affair of the attack on the monastery St. Germain des Prés had made considerable oise in Paris, and the part acted in it by the Petit Feuillant had excited great merriment and derision; so ill-used had he been, and much was the delicacy of his appearance jured that, for some weeks, he was unable quit his bed. On the morning when he ist ventured to reappear, smiles greeted him herever he came, but they were far other han those he desired to meet. Irritated at this reception, and throwing all the blame of the adventure on La Mole's desertion of him at the moment of need, he resolved to rerenge himself by no longer keeping the secret with which he had been intrusted.

The Queen-mother and the ladies of La Petite Bande were amusing themselves with listening to the sallies of René and Ruggieri, the former having been careful to attend to the hint which had fallen from his royal mistress, their wit being generally directed to the annoyance of each other. The arrival of Montgaillard promised a mine of fresh repartee; as his présence d'esprit was remarkable, and he was just now a fit subject for ridicule, René,

with a countenance of assumed concertened to meet the monk, whose natural in his gait was far from improved by misadventure. He introduced him with affected ceremony, and offered his supconduct the Petit Feuillant to the feet Queen and her ladies.

"How fares it with you, reverend it said Catherine, "your illness has so lo prived us of amusement, that we ha return amongst us, widowed and forsa we all now are, with infinite pleasure."

"Your Grace," said Montgaillard, we resolved to endure all the pleasantry at him as equably as he might, "is even and complimentary; and I would willing dure a thousand such misfortunes a which has lately been my lot, to be a on my return with smiles from such fair as those around me."

"Surely," said the beautiful De S
"we must all appear to strange disadv
after your visit to the Lady of the Lake."

"What news, reverend sir," said René, the world of waters? Did your occult ing enable you to understand the langua the fishes? if so, pray let us know their or of passing events." .pucu —

ard," said he, "of an affair which had ome sensation in the finny court, and I ave to relate it, as it bears much resemo scenes passing in our own world; a ance which proves to me that there is elty under the sun, since, however deep dive to obtain it, it eludes our grasp. 4 that the beautiful princess of the e had a dogfish, whom she entertained ol, and to whom she was much attachishing to pleasure her favourite, she on him a young mermaiden, to whom o be united with great ceremony, when shark, who had taken a fancy to the f his devotions, one day when she was her golden tresses on a rock, snapped and swam off with his prey. He had sted by a dolphin, who guided them to e beneath the waves, where the mertion, went shaking his bells up and down the court, and crying to his mistress for help, to me purpose. Now, the dolphin, had he pleased could have pointed out the proper object of li vengeance, yet was he stupid enough to tree him with impertinence, and thus deprive himsel of the necessary knowledge."

"How?" said Catherine: "methinks I should like to know what had become of the shark."

"He was sent, please your Grace," continue the Petit Feuillant, "to devour a shoal of be rings, who had risen against the state; and concealed his loss, leaving all the blame an ridicule of the adventure with the much-injure and friendly dolphin."

" Explain, explain!" cried Catherine imp "Your riddle wearies me. tiently. this shark, and who is this tedious dolphin?

"The first," answered he, "is my lord L Mole, and the second is my unworthy self; who in assisting what I conceived to be an innocen folly of that gentleman's, have exposed mysel to irreverent treatment, and the ridicule of the fair."

"La Mole!" exclaimed Marguerite of Navarre. "Is it possible?"

" René," said the Queen, laughing, " your sagacity has been for once deceived, and your uguenot rival is, after all, not the culprit.

uggieri, did not your prescience desert you

en you bade our deceived swain look that

y?"

The learned astrologer," said Montgaillard,
had his sight not been dazzled by a recent
covery of the philosopher's stone, in which
was assisted by the accomplished chevalier
question,—would better have interpreted the
guage of the stars."

Ruggieri bit his lip and was silent. The two lians looked at each other with no very coral glances; both, however, endeavoured to meeal their feelings; and an indifferent obser would have augured little mischief from ir demeanour towards each other. Cathea, however, who well knew the dispositions each, was aware of the probable consequences this discovery, and resolved to turn the attention of those present into a more agreeable fannel.

"Montgaillard," said she, familiarly, "your oice has so long been unheard amongst us that a have almost forgotten the sound of sweet usic. Sing, we pray thee, some ditty to rever our memories. René, tune yonder lute, at you may accompany our reverend melo-

The Petit Feuillant smiled, well-plea be invited to exhibit his favourite accorment; and, looking with a languishing the ladies, he sang a new villanelle, b portes, the gay and lively poet, whose were the passion of the moment.

VILLANELLE.

Rosette, methinks the time was short
I left you here alone;
But soon your eye fresh fancies caught,
And straight your heart was gone!
And I so well am taught by you
To laugh at ev'ry vow,
That I have learnt to wander too,
And love another now.
'Tis not strange
We should range,
Like the bee that flutters by:

Time will show
Which shall know
First repentance—you or I.

While I, in painful absence crost,
Was weeping both our woes,
You, chary of the time we lost,
A newer lover chose!
No vane at every zephyr's sigh
Can veer so quickly round;
None loved you once so well as I,
And none so false I found.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

'Tis but fair
I should share
Both your truth and falsehood too.
Time will show
Which shall know
First repentance—I or you.

"Your song is more agreeable than your ws, Montgaillard," said Catherine. "René, u must forgive Cosmo this little piece of achery; you know he is the bosom friend of Mole; and, to a friend, how could he refuse aid?"

"I swear to you, René," said Cosmo aside, the Petit Feuillant is malicious. I had no lea of La Mole's intention of carrying off your ride; nor do I now believe it. Besides, how ould she be conveyed to the camp, or kept here without creating scandal? It is an invention of the spiteful monk."

"My dear friend," answered René, "I canlot for a moment suppose it to be true. Pray e not uneasy on account of this business. I aw your zeal in my cause, and I appreciate it."

This was said on both sides with the intenon of quieting the evident anxiety of the tueen-mother, as well as to lull the suspicions hich each knew the other entertained. As tuggieri retired his rival followed him with one of those glances peculiar to himself; and as a smiled an adieu muttered to himself, "He drinks not always in a Venice glass."

Marguerite of Navarre heard with mortified vanity that one, whom she considered devoted to herself, had dared to conceive a passion for another.

The Queen-mother resolved to turn this discovery to account, as she knew of Charles's lately conceived hatred to La Mole; and by introducing to his observation the wrongs of René she hoped he would make common cause with him, and receive her minion with a greater degree of favour than hitherto. In this she was not deceived. The King laughed heartily at the whole adventure recounted by his mother, and from that time talked of René with a complacent indulgence, which soon led to a desime to employ him.

It was midnight when Catherine sought her observatory tower, where René was to give admission to Florio, according to her command. The two Italians had been waiting for some time previous to her arrival, and their conversation was not intended for her ear.

"And so you know my mistress," said Read, "of old? I can tell you, then, nothing that you are not already acquainted with."

"Why," answered Florio, "you are well are that I was in her service before the death her husband."

Yes," replied René; "but you spoke but w of a time previous to that, and I would fain ir some particulars of her early life, of which he speaks strange things."

The time is not yet come for you to know replied the Captain, "or you would start that which I could relate. This much I ald conceal from her: she has never remised you as the son I left in Paris with old jeweller, and it answers my purpose, well as your own, that neither she nor others ould suspect the connection between us."

"So be it," replied René. "I confess I am it very solicitous to produce my illustrious ther to the world."

"But you must provide for him, though?"

"That I will willingly do, through Cathene," answered the worthy son. "But you by you have her in your power, and she will fuse you nothing."

"You will see," replied Florio. "My testinony of former days could crush her; and she nows it. You must leave us together, and the result of our conference I will relate to you." The step of Catherine was heard tower stair, and Bianco, sliding softly the door, opened it and admitted her. Sh not a word, but motioning him to with made haste to obey, and she was left a the chamber with Florio. He stood wra a large mantle, with his broad hat draw his brows, and appeared to wait till Copened the conversation.

"You have desired to see me," she length; "for what purpose? I thou ended between us."

"You hoped so," answered he. "Yo that those you had employed to waylay that journey which I took at your inswhen Anthony of Navarre was to be of, had performed their office. I recover your hand in that; but I escaped the have since been prisoner with the Turspent years in the galleys, and but a she since was able to reach your capital, during the entertainment you gave the at your daughter's wedding I have done service to the cause of good Catholics I am poor, and want supplies; and the know myself unwelcome, I have sought the purpose of relieving my necessities."

" Here is gold !" said Catherine

this and fly from Paris. You can do ice, yet. You know Montgomery yet René will accompany De Retz to Engand if you accomplish his destruction shall not be wanting. Had you sucformerly, what years of unsated hatred we been spared me!"

wife, at least, died by my means," said

- and his child!" added Catherine, antly.

are mistaken," said the ruffian, deli-"his son had been carried off; and told you my dagger had reached him, a fable."

!" cried Catherine, passionately; "dared eceive me?"

re do much," replied he; "but I keep that suits not my purpose: you know buld reveal. The Convent of ——" ful shudder came over Catherine; she p. "Florio," she said, "torture me not.

e, and reflect if it is well to carry rudence further. Reveal aught of fores to a living creature in France, and cance shall find you though you were the deepest cavern of the earth. Be d silent, and besides all that my im-

processed same allows me to give you I did notice with a pension, paid by the city was a water was will be secure for life. In you comment was all the secure for life. In

when you have me go to England, then? I will not be my first visit there, for Rodolf me found me me fall; wherever conspiration in the in the good of Mother Church, I amount in make me." He crossed himself at a sunce will great appearance of devotion.

request - year can aid me much with the mineral street. Elizabeth has many foes, on Mary Street may yet be rescued from her pieces. I will give you directions, and shall represent the remember,—secrecy and my ward?

As size spoke she left the chamber, and had ing descended the stairs till she reached the door which communicated with the palace, the tered, and closed it, after giving a signal which René heard, who, mounting from the place in had quitted, led the Italian back as he intered, without any words passing on either side while they remained in the tower.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MILL.

In legendary lore
The ling ring hours beguiled.—Goldsmith.

THE intelligence which Claude and his comnions brought of the project which the enemy d conceived of destroying their fountains, used much anxiety, and the idea of their ing poisoned created such alarm that the agistrates commanded the three public founins should be guarded to prevent the inhaitants from using the water till it was disovered whether any danger arose from doing At the little village of La Font was the ource of this precious supply, and there Biron rected his men to repair, who set about cutng the pipes and destroying the cisterns which nducted the waters to the town; they added this destruction an attempt to impregnate the arce with poison, and remained highly satisd with the idea that the loss of so important upply would extremely distress the besieged.

mand, and after a violent strug La Font was abandoned by the who were content in having ac object. In this, however, th failed, for the three beautiful threw up their columns as hi glittered as purely in the sun: pipes which led immediately were cut, other inexhaustible v ous little streamlets poured into yond with greater force; no o was done, and the townspeople temporary terror might cease was a delightful discovery, fo assurance that the town would in consequence of drought.

Letters soon after arrived for Virolet, who had been taken late skirmish, entreating that he be paid, and that he might town: here, however, the intell was of use, as he disclosed the

and receiving their gold in return. This edge induced still greater caution on the f the Rochellois, and they held themselves red for attack on every side.

nting parties were constantly made from mp, in order to deceive the besieged and them into an ambuscade, but in vain; every day La Nouë, with the other, made a sortie, and drove the enemy the houses and strong places where they to entrench themselves; all parley was ed, as the frequent approach and easy adn of heralds and messengers they consiextremely dangerous where treachery had once discovered.

Protestant ladies showed themselves no benevolent than their predecessors, the Nuns, had been in the hospital of Staterite; for there was not a female in the who did not readily give time, money, tendance to the wounded soldiers who its walls. Alix now found with pleasure t was in her power to repay the hospitof the Rochellois, by devoting herself to ervice under the guidance of her pretty Lesselline, who had become quite an nurse since the commencement of the Every day, too, banquets were pre-

pared in every house for the officers and the manders, and provisions of all sorts really the soldiers who defended the town; one ing aione prevailed, that of determined to ance, and all felt that they were individu called upon to contribute their part towards general support and encouragement. Each was required in his turn to carry building terials to the ramperts in the town, but from marmaring at the severity of their di the utmost alacrity and willingness were show even women and children entreated to be ployed as watchers, and they were found many instances to be of essential service. the siege went on the ladies of the high distinction begged to be permitted to take their share in any duty for which they migh be considered capable, and one of the man intrepid amongst them was Lesselline, the daughter of De Hommet, who, a delicate, lively girl of not more than seventeen, sprang at out into a heroine on beholding the necessity exertion. The post assigned to this intrepl and interesting young warrior was that of keep ing watch at the highest part of the huge Tor de Moreilles, which on one side overlooked immense extent of salt-marshes beneath, and the other commanded a view of the sea, which

t against its base with hoarse murmurs, and high water filled the fossés that surrounded Day after day during the hours which they did steal from attendance on the sick, Lesine and her scarcely less heroic cousin Alix k their station on the tower, hoping to bed the promised vessels spreading their white s afar, and directing their course towards harbour; but day after day they could only cry the ships of the enemy hovering near, keeping at a distance every friendly bark t endeavoured to approach.

The high, large, and strong tower of St. Nilas was well provided with every description defence for those families who desired to ke it their retreat. The smaller tower of Chaine, close beside, was equally well deded: it derived its name from the circumace of supporting the great chain which was, en necessary, thrown from its walls to the er tower, guarding the entrance of the har-This was a position of importance, on these towers depended much of the ength of the town; and to a Captain of apoved courage and prudence the command s always entrusted, a new one being appointed ery year. From this Tour de la Chaine, the ty walls, high and strong, extended all along

ous sands and rocks of the rugger thence the walls ran onwards abo embankment, made to form a the fury of the tide in that part des Moulins was gained, which fully guarded and fortified. Bet a boulevard had been erected l Navarre, of exceeding strength casemates, and fossés so well confamous engineer Scipio, that it w pregnable. Several old towers, p tance without the walls, defended tines. The next boulevard w Dames, and had been raised t height by the indefatigable labour and all the townswomen of La R time of its former siege; for e their turn de porter la hotte as that is, to carry the mortar and

, and looked upon as one of the most nt points in this well defended town. e was no want of ramparts or platforms the town, whether to sustain pieces of or to support the weaker parts of the n case of their being attacked. In those of inferior strength, and where the thickas least, large and deep trenches were ustained by strong parapets, from behind he arquebusiers could not fail to reach ho ventured to approach this part.

ditches of the town were deep and and the parapets and battlements administracted. The ancient ruined Temple De Coigne, without the walls, command-extensive view over the wide marshes were untenable for cannon or encampf any kind; thus it will be seen that La le presented a formidable appearance besiegers; and all who had approached unfriendly views learned to hold it in

the Porte de Coigne were several mills, f which the enemy had burnt, and the Ros feared that the same fate would attend that remained; in particular, they were respecting the mill of La Brande, which at three hundred yards from the coun-

terscarp. Captain le Normand had requ to have this mill, which he at first propos fortify; but finding it would be impossib keep it, he resolved to gain some profit and accordingly sent the millers every de grind their corn, who returned each night to the town. For the security of that w was left in the mill, he appointed one only as a guard. Mathurin Lussaut, and to distinguish himself, and full of courage zeal in the cause, was delighted to find the had fallen to his lot, one night, to protect mill, and he accordingly took his post the anticipating no particular danger. He provided himself with a light, had made a fire, and taken to amuse himself, during long hours of the night, an old book of lege lent him by a friend in the town. All quiet; the enemy seemed to have forgotten part of the country, and the hollow sighin the wind along the sails of the mill, a broke the stillness of midnight. He thou of his pretty Clarice, of whom he was fond and proud. He rejoiced that she safe with her aunt; but he could not press his regrets at the absence which migh so long protracted. Occasionally the scene the massacre came before his mind's eve, and

idered at the dangers they had escaped: the ant Montgomery saved by his means, next to his memory, and he reflected with pleason his preservation.

ength, he trimmed his lamp and opened his k. It was a collection of tales of supersti, always believed in Brittany, and listened with eager interest. He turned over the res, and at last hit upon one which interested

In the old mill of Pouldu, not far from the nt of rock which seems to cleave the roar-waves at its feet, lived the miller Trevihan, was more than a hundred years old, and lived in that mill as long as any man could tember. He had witnessed as many shipcks as there are nights in the year; he had as many steeples stricken with lightning as the are weeks; and no one could say how my times he had beheld the Doll-men with cing dwarfs circling round its huge stones. had visited the Tourigans in their caves, he knew all things past and to come.

* He was dwarfish in stature, and his large gave-bras, * like great flour-sacks, seemed bury him in their folds. His long thin legs

^{*} Culottes.

his two eyes unlike each othe at night in his mill, smoking h looked like a fiend risen up amie vet this frightful monster dare the prettiest girls in the pa was Francique, and she was young sailor, Kerias, who h several weeks at sea; and du her father, who was very avarie to the proposals of the dwarf. · "But Trevihan is old and l pretty maiden, 'and Kerias is young; besides, I gave him m will wed none but him.' "When Trevihan heard this, 'It is true I look aged, but I to renew my youth; and why si have recourse to the Touriga me?

ne for youth; if I grant it you again, you t give me up your bride to nurse my little geling, as you have done all your brides re.'

She shall be yours a year and a day after we married her,' said the miller. He drew knife, and spilled three drops of his blood the fountain; a cloud rose out of it, and red him all round; when it cleared away a stood in his place a handsome young mat, gay and sprightly, who took his way back he village, and stopped at the gate of neique.

Open, open, Francique, said he; I am as, come back from sea to claim your pro-

Very happy was the pretty maiden when saw her lover, and she welcomed him with races; but she bade him hasten away, for father had forbidden her to hold discourse him, as she was to marry the dwarf of the of Pouldu.

Fear not,' said her lover, 'he is no longer to trouble you; no one has seen him at mill, and it is said he has fallen over the into the sea. I am rich now, and your er will not refuse me your hand.'

The father of Francique loved gold, and,

was always unhappy: she did love for Kerias, she shuddered near her, and always wished h last she could endure her fee and resolved to make a pilgrim of Ste. Ninoc'h, on the borders Kérisonet. She got up one break, and pursued her way; s far when a little white fawn out of a brake, and began to she was much alarmed, and w. her paternoster all the way whoever sees the white fawn will lose her husband on the riage. The fawn kept gambe and she thought the whole time heard of that mysterious anim years ago this fawn was purs and took refuge in the oratory whose hermitage was in this we then the fawn haunted these gla e. After some time she left the place to arn home, her heart much lightened, and as reached the edge of the wood she met rias coming to meet her, and to her surse felt towards him the same affection as r. She told him she had now no regrets, I would no longer delay naming the weddings. Kerias smiled, and replied that he had at morning only returned from sea, and was ciced to find such happiness awaited him: 'I i,' he said, 'as poor as ever; and will your her consent?'

"' What can you mean?' replied the maiden; not everything ready, and my consent alone nting, not my father's, for that he has given; for being poor, that is a joke, as we know, I he thinks it a very good one; for myself, s you I love, not your gold; and to-morrow vill be your wife.'

Everything was ready next morning; the de-maids, and men with their flowers and bons; plenty of crépes on the board, and the valan * full of merriment. She was taken to arch by her father and her friends, but as a alighted from her little white horse at the or, to the surprise of all two trains approachfrom opposite roads, and preceding them beared two young men in sailors' dress, both

[·] Negociator of weddings.

bride shrieked with astonishin mediately to one whom her was the true, but her father other being the real bridegr contention ensued. While the the priest came forward, and b the church, which they did. "Now,' said he, 'I will t to both these men, in the na Ste. Ninoc'h, who will reveal one; till to-night let every churchyard; the bride and the shall remain close to the al Heaven will provide for the re " All was done as the pries and they remained in praye of that day. At the close church-yard gate suddenly wood, and in the sight of all

came trotting up to the church

te Kerias and his beloved remained ck, and falling on their knees at the ed the blessed saint for their delified dwarf of the mill was never seen but his spirit may be sometimes being amongst the ruins of the mill of netimes in the shape of an aged and man, sometimes as a Loup-garou, tters such hideous and appalling the old mill trembles, and—"

k fell from the hand of Lussaut; ap and grasped his arquebuse, for a of artillery burst upon his ear, fear-aying of the fiendish wolf itself. He he small window, and beheld a sight o amaze a solitary man alone in a de, which he was to defend single-

ight of the moon, which struggling tormy clouds occasionally threw the surrounding country, Lussaut company of infantry had surrounded lanted two culverins, which were ards the devoted spot, and had alter fatal discharge. He placed se against the small opening, out of ized, and fired; but he felt that to inst this force was impossible.

Captain le Normand was son when he was roused at midning of artillery so near the ramp with great vexation, that the rounded that it was impossible unfortunate sentinel. He rush and called loudly, as if there is in the mill,—"Courage, sold You shall soon have relief!"—firing upon those without.

Mathurin heard his voice but he saw the promise could the shouted the names of sev

made as violent a noise as podeceive the besiegers into a b companions. Sixteen times the ed their fire against his retreated began, though very strong, to of giving way. Finding this,

Then, do your worst!" exclaimed Lussaut, had reloaded, and now sent his last ball ongst them: "we will not surrender on less ons."

* Obstinate fools!" cried out those without. Your rickety old mill will not protect you ng; but we will not be too hard: come own and open your doors, and you may return your vixen of a town, and welcome. We wall soon batter down the walls, and have you lat our mercy."

Mathurin was not sorry to hear this, as his ast defence was gone. He therefore descended be ladder, and began to remove the bolts and ars of his fortress. Having done so, he issued orth, much to the surprise of the assailants, line!

"Where are your comrades?" was the immeiate question.

"I am governor, and garrison, captain, and ompany, all in my own person," replied Lusaut. "My castle is now at your disposal; and much good may it do you."

"What means the insolent churl?" exclaimed he foremost of the band. "Does he mean to ay he has kept us loitering here so long, triving against one man? Let him be hung up the next tree, to teach the rebels manners."

him away, when the Duke of just come up, cried out: " I fellow, and has done his duty. spared."

The soldiers began to mu amongst themselves, that A ready to show favour to the King. The Duke rode off, as sullen remarks, and Lussaut hands.

"We will have the Hugue the galleys: it is a better serves," said Coconnas, who we mand. "Let him be shaved, demned dress on him; and we we will send him off to exercise the par."

This cruel sentence seemed satisfaction; and the unfortun dragged away to the camp, a ruined shed, which had been the recention of prisoners.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SURPRISE.

What hallooing, and what stir is this to-day?

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

THE siege of La Rochelle had been underken with more impetuosity than prudence. be King of Poland looked forward daily to a mmons to repair to his new kingdom; and, ough he resolved to delay that event as long possible, yet he was desirous of leaving beand him a great name amongst the French, adding to his former achievements that of the reduction of this obstinate town, the im-Portance of which was great. He imagined hat all Europe would ring with his praises, if be obtained this victory; that Poland would bail him as a hero, and France long for him as her monarch. He therefore urged the attack, having vowed to reduce the town before the ambassadors from Poland arrived.

La Mole had satisfied him that the lady in his suite had departed, though he did not exthan under what circumstances. He hope recover Airx by means of the scouts he sent must and proposed on her return to sent her mure effectually. His morth was recovered in finding that his party he implies to take the fugitive; and the absolute assumished and annoved him.

Linuis and Reseased meanwhile we Rochellois as volu traveler with their band of friends, vicin were entiretastic in the cause. vers assigned them, and, as every da securitarity of performing some act of t the specific became distinguished, an The large raise Les serves Clerca. The times: mile ine command of Captain mund, who was pleased to have gained sent a surport; and their zeal and n some made them acquainted with all the writers resident. Whenever a bold so proposed some of the Braves Clercs were is a time and on every occasion their tess tessence of mind, and hardihood somes to attend the enterprise. It one of these skirmishes that an event of which greatly raised Claude in the est of his companions, and gave an imports somer to the besieged.

mucie mey placed men gabrought their cannon opposite the l'Evangile. They had greatly exench, which reached along a meadow the foot of the bastion itself. La , fop as he was, was yet a good not wanting in courage, had the f the party engaged in this service; night, highly satisfied with what they plished, he, and some choice comsolved to repay themselves for their ing as well as the excellent cooks in the refined epicure could make them. ce of their retreat was at a mansion fallen into their power, called La and there they had caused everyarranged with the greatest care. men," said La Mole, as they sat ble, "it is true that one might dine aris, under the auspices of Samson, mocent, those high-priests of luxury.

good-will is great; let us, the to endure our hardships with nation. We have, alas! but but I earnestly believe that the will be found perfect, the ra passable;-the pastry has, I to by the agitation of my excelle nerves are a little disturbed this cursed Huguenoterie, wh a little consideration for nobler "Poor wretches!" said ("I suspect their own cookery different quality; it is the n imaginable to hear Virolet's de the canaille suffer in Sancerr come so expert in cooking hid of Innocent's can, they say, They are wondrously ingenio fine plat out of their horses' succeeded so well in concocting rites. I am told that they go about in the cets raking the dunghills for bones which they and for bread. It deprives one of appetite to ink of it."

"But what is peculiarly mortifying," said the hevalier d'Angoulême, "is, that this very oming five fine deer, frightened by the treendous screeching of Frezaie, whose notes are nly inimitable, ran out of their woods, and shed with headlong impetuosity through the amp, before one of our idiots had time to send note after them; they kept their course even the very walls, where they were all killed by the besieged, who are doubtless now satisfying their plebeian hunger on those noble animals!"

"This is positively a crime!" returned La lole; "may the horns choke them! and may be have no soup but that they make by grinding bones till the siege is ended!"

"When are we to be emancipated from this avery?" lisped Maugiron; "why have we not attered down their walls at once? I cannot nderstand the silly delay; are laws to be given s by a set of peasants like these! I would I ad the command for one day; the weather is etting stormy and unpleasant, and we must essitively exert a little spirit, and obtain hous-

awkward on our return to F this state of barbarism." " On ne prend par des mitaine," said D'O; "for wh great cannon, with its doubl christened Mitaine, and of play upon their paper walls town is ours. I blame this as you, and after our dinne I propose a little diversion yonder, which is kept but b can in the darkness easily s it will be a work of some our elders a little promptitud "Excellent!" exclaimed i "we will but drink a bumpe les dames de nos pensées au it. How the idiots will gar 't La Chateauneuf to tears."

me devil has carried her off, I verily besaid La Mole; "it was Virolet's untimeral that caused me to lose her; but how
as spirited away I have no conception.
irl! she adored me; and it was the tens of my heart which could not endure her
ties to accompany me, her reproaches at
utting her, that induced me to comply
er wishes, and bring her here."

she handsome, La Mole?" inquired L

oo pale, in my mind," said Coconnas.

Equisite," replied La Mole; "but it is
r beauty which attaches me—it is her deto me: she has left her father, Bailly the
ent of Accounts, and a splendid match,
to my arms. 'Beloved Boniface!' said
s she threw herself at my feet; 'forgive

As he spoke, a shot whistled above his had before they could scarcely rise from table it followed by several others, and they interest themselves surrounded by armed men. Daying their swords, and overturning their said and tables to form a rampart, the officers in fended themselves manfully against their as sailants; but great was the mortification of Mole to find that the party was led by no other than Claude, who, springing towards him, who a sudden stroke wrested the sword from his hand, and he found himself at his mercy.

"Retract what you have said, villain!" claimed Claude. "Tell your companions the you stole away a lady, on whom you are worthy to look; and add, that she fled from you and has taken refuge with her friends in La Rochelle. Yield yourself my prisoner, of die!"

"Base groom!" cried La Mole, "unhand me. I will not surrender to such as you! Bring me your Captain, and I will acknowled!" myself vanquished."

"You shall yield to me only, as some recompense for the unhappiness you have comme," said Claude, as he possessed himself of its sword, and gave him in charge to several of its companions, while he pursued the advantage

bad gained; and, after making other priers, and having entirely routed the party, ing some wounded on the spot, the brave es and their captives returned merrily to Rochelle.

he news of the capture of La Mole was red in the town with great satisfaction, and
infinite annoyance to the Catholic party.

In D'O was severely wounded, and
giron feared that the injury done to his
would prevent him from showing off in a
ard for some time.

axious to revenge this injury, and furious e success of this little band, the King of nd resolved next day to open a fire upon own. He had again possessed himself of illage of La Font, and no less than thirtybattering pieces were assembled at that Those of the town were, however, not and being aware of the intention of the ly, were ready to attack them where considered themselves most secure. The e was furious, and lasted no less than six La Nouë had, for the second time, his killed under him, when Claude and les es Clercs at that moment rushed towards him. Duke d' Aumale was advancing with great tuosity, mounted, and pointing his arquebuse at the head of Bras de Fer, when a shotfree the piece of Claude broke his arm, and sared 1. 1 La Nouë's life. The Duke's horse, which we wounded, plunged and threw him, and a soldier of the Huguenot party ran his sword through his body. Great was the slaughter which sued; more than a hundred and fifty of the enemy were slain, and several on the side of in besieged, besides twenty wounded, who were carefully conveyed into the town after the battle was over. The loss of the Duke d' Aumale, and so many others, struck dismay into the hearts of the besiegers. A cessation of hostilties was agreed on for several days, during which no works were to go on, and breathing time was allowed; not with a view on the put of the King of Poland to accommodation, but to enable him to recommence the attack with greater furv.

Sad were the reflections of poor Lussaut when he found himself a prisoner, with the loss of his cherished curls, and habited in the coarse dress of a felon.

"This is hard," said he, in a desponding mood, "after such a capital resistance as I made and having taken in those goujats de massecreurs, to be sent to the galleys, like a criminal instead of getting a step in my company. or little Clarice! this will be sad news for I can't even send her a lock of my hair a remembrance. Is there no way to get out this place? It does not seem over-strong; dif I escaped the mêlée in Paris, I don't see at it should be impossible here."

He looked round the chamber in which he d been thrust, and examined every part; but ere seemed little chance of escape. Several urs passed; and at length a soldier entered th his prison fare,—a handful of chestnuts, niece of black bread, and some water.

"Is this the way the King treats his subts?" said Mathurin; "and is this the good th we are to expect at the hands of his cers? I was promised free way back to La ochelle, if I gave up my fortress; and now im treated like a felon."

"It's no affair of mine," said the soldier; ou should not reproach me; it's the fate of

"No such thing," replied Lussaut; "your aptain ought to be ashamed to call himself a ldier, and forfeit his word. Is this black ead all I am to have?"

"And good enough, too!" surlily cried the ldier, "for a Huguenot."

"I am no Huguenot," returned Mathurin.

"The forty martyrs forbid! but as good a Catholic as any in Biron's army: but if to prome one's faith one must cut the throats of one's neighbours without remorse, and in cold blook, I'd rather be a Turk or a Jew, than such a Christian."

"Why," said the soldier, with a stupid star, "I thought all the other side were Huguenous. What did you do in that mill?"

A sudden thought flashed on the mind of Mathurin.

"This seems a stupid fellow," said he we himself: "what if I could persuade him that I was ready to betray the town? it might lead to good. As for that," he added, answering his jailor, "one's obliged to obey orders. I'verther take arms on this side, if I could; but I was pressed into the service, and couldn't help myself. I know a few things which Birms wouldn't be sorry if he knew as well—ay, and I'd tell them, too, if I got paid for it."

"Oh, you would?" said a voice behind which Mathurin recognized as that of Captain Virolet. "Leave me alone with this fellow, he added to the soldier, "and I will question him."

The soldier retired, and Lussaut remaind alone with the Captain, who had so lately be serted from the Huguenot party.

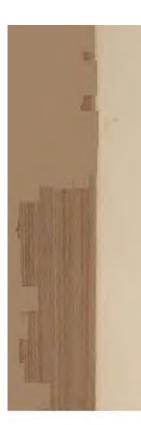
Are you willing," said the traitor, "to ist in an enterprise to enter the town by atagem? if so, you are safe from the galleys, I shall be well rewarded; but remember, if I are not true, I have men within the walls o can revenge any attempt at deception."

'I am a poor man," replied Mathurin, "and st get my bread. I serve whoever pays best, I hope there's no harm in that; they are renough in La Rochelle, and a man gets y hard blows for his pains. I am tired of h work, and if a good round sum were offered, I don't think I should stand bargaining."

'Then come with me to the General," said olet, "and he will talk to you about it." So saying, he led the way, and Mathurin owed, passing several soldiers and sentinels, he reached the tent of the General Duc de ron, whom he found surrounded by his staff.

rolet, leaving him at the entrance of the tent aversed in a low voice with Biron, after which was ordered to approach. He was then sed what the general feeling in the town s, and he thought it prudent to represent at the men were, in general, discontented, d ready to lay down their arms, if a good portunity occurred.

"What troop do you think most likely to be en to bribery?" asked Biron. Mathurin



tive, who had spoken against rejoined, in a voice loud enoughear, "He speaks truth; there I know of in that company."

"And," said Mathurin, enco success, "if I could promise regiment of strangers and foreign refuse to listen to a sensible prop

"Do you know the Captains Puygaillard?" asked Virolet, sign "Truly," replied Mathurin, when accused the whole garrison leads to the second to

"they would not be the men to way of a soldier turning an hones

After a great many questions a sultation Mathurin was ordered prison, with a prospect of bein the next day to arrange furthe be done, and whether he should His being a Catholic and a strasidered in his favour, and, as the the town, repair to Captain de Saux, i him of the intention of the enemy to under cover of the night, a breach l been made in the walls, near the Deux Moulins, and to conceal thema trench beneath, where a mound of ld facilitate their entrance, provided assisted from within. A list of those ready to lend their aid in the betraval n was given to Lussaut, and he was to th any of the commanders to whom he t readily obtain access. This plan sets permitted to leave his uncomfortable d, accordingly, after having been dely a few days, in the dusk of the e bent his steps to La Rochelle; as ached the walls he began to run, avour the deception, several soldiers in pursuit, who sent shots after the

municate all he had been able to learn of the treachery which lurked amongst them.

Great was the mortification and alarm discovered because the Rochellois leaders, when they discovered because the extensive was the treason which the profession of Mathurin had brought to light. Three coptains and no less than twenty men were tains and no less than twenty men were cated, and in the company of the brave land Normand most of them had concealed the selves. All these were arrested, and, some of them having confessed, it was found that the watchword by which they were to be known of the little finger and catching the tip of the ear with it.

The hour and the place being indicated Lussaut, it was directed that Captain le Nomand, with an approved band, amongst when were Claude, Belcastel, and their party, should post themselves behind the wall opposite to breach, and there be ready to receive the breach, and there be ready to receive the breach, and the rain descended at intervals with violence; the watchers were, however, sheltered by the walk as they listened eagerly for the sound of the approaching enemy. Presently some of the rubbish beneath was thrown against the walk and Lussaut, stepping forward to the breach stooped down and gave the word "Badin."

ve you ladders," said he, "and how e you? All is prepared;—several hunve joined us."

e spoke, two ladders were placed, and t who, mounted was Captain Virolet. re a strong body," said he. "Where aux?"

se by," said Mathurin, "but he has ons for not coming forwards; step this I he will join you;—give me your hand, , put your foot on that stone—all's

Buittinière Picque-ardoise ready?" asked

mount, as silently as possible, or the whom we must surprise, will hear." ill give the word, then," said Virolet; it was whispered to those in the the soldiers began to mount in single Virolet had advanced, as directed by t, towards the opposite wall, where ected to meet De Saux, when he was and gagged in a moment, and at the ime a volley of artillery welcomed aling party. A fearful struggle then ace; the whole town was instantly on rt, lights appeared in every direction, erything told the besiegers that they

made a furious sortie, in whi
the troops who were advance
and routed them with great
which, they returned to the
discomfited Catholics in much
the best of their way back to t
Virolet was carried prisone
and a speedy example was m

Virolet was carried prisone and a speedy example was me and his treacherous compartown:—they suffered public the execrations of their fellow-remains were thrown from the voured by the birds of prey whom the frequent combats wards the plain beneath.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AMBASSADOR.

Wit me warns to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy.

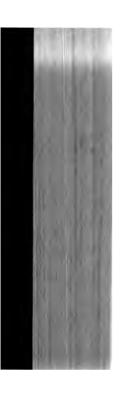
Queen Elizabeth's Verses.

THE inhabitants of the town of Dover were one morning roused from their slumbers by the sound guns at sea, which were answered by a royal salute from the batteries on the heights. Every and rushed to the shore, half expecting to behold the Landing of an enemy. But it was soon appawent that several French ships were entering the barbour, bearing the royal flag, and coming in all amity on a special mission. One by one, amidst the repeated greetings of the cannon above, the vessels approached, and preparations were made for the landing of their illustrious passengers. These were Gondi, Duke de Retz. Ambassador Extraordinary from the French Court to Queen Elizabeth, and his suite. soon as it was known who the visitors were, a name of Catherine's chief favour lor was proclaimed on every sid "What brings the Italian ad us?" said a bystander; "v Romish marriages here; no c the dark, no murdering by who This unfriendly feeling was creased when the cargo of which the Ambassador disemb ed. As if he had arrived on Gondi, with insolent affectat every variety of accommoda be imagined, to be broug Not only cooking utensils, e monest article, but chests and visions, and hampers of wine w tapestry, and furniture. The upstart favourite and his train p two ranks of guards, which I the Queen to do him honour, w with him," said one.

s the only thing fit for his use which lent craven will not find in England," ther; "though it is better he should himself with viands, for ours are too be swallowed by any of these massacrns." . 11 1 1

loves blood better than good English served a third. "It would be a good pelt him and his ragamuffins through ts."

nurmuring crowd was, however, kept the men-at-arms, who conducted Gondi, t alarmed at his reception by the peomansion which had been set apart for ere he and Bianco, who accompanied is chief officer, consulted together on ct. "These savage islanders," said he, teir surly disposition too plainly; I fear ittle chance of propitisting them."



envoys of Charles IX. This a disconcerted the schemes of c as it betrayed a want of confic was particularly vexatious, as communication with their frie lic party less direct and conve

The Queen herself was with the minister of Charles she should betray her own in fore, while she kept the an party aloof, made a merit of h them at Dover.

Accordingly when she arrithey received from her was much art was put in force answer the ends each had i quest for a loan was evaded had no inclination to assist F ture, although it was not here.

e knows no bounds, and they forget nope of injuring France the gratitude to you."

y have received no encouragement from lied Elizabeth. "I should be the last rebellion; but I consider that they have rdly used, in not being permitted the of their religion; and I cannot blame refusing to admit into their town those received orders to treat them with the our as their brethren in Paris and the ies of France."

3! Madam," returned Gondi; "I fear ujesty has fallen into an error. King loves all his subjects independently of ofession of faith, which he respects, he cannot conceive the tenets of Calvin at to excite the same degree of indulmiration from a Catholic as the purer a of Luther, which, I believe, receive



mmocent persons, men, women dren, who could not have offend

"The Admiral, Madam," sai and with infinite effrontery, "ca a pomp and parade, and an arm partisans, entirely eclipsing by majesty of the King, throwin his power, and outraging his d in the first place ask, would you mit this insolence in any of who surround you?"

"I!" exclaimed Elizabeth, rewould dare to attempt it? I we but punish the daring subject we of such boldness."

"Certainly," continued Gonc King thought the same; but al not your Majesty's firmness and King mildly expostulated; represented of the Admiral's conduct of di continued: — "Charles still conded to entreaty, but Coligny knew his Paris was filled with riot and disorder; tends of the King were contemned and sed, and, to crown all, it was discovered plot was nearly ripe for execution, in all the royal family were to be sacrificed, the Admiral to seize the crown of France. This to be endured? Could patience last? The Admiral met his fate, and delive.

ith respect to the rigour shown to those religion which your Majesty mentions, at a loss to understand what it was. less, the Admiral did not fall alone; of his followers shared his fate. It has d me, and much do I deplore it, that r more men of letters fell by unhappy nt, in the scuffle; but I can safely affirm either female nor child suffered. Good the very thought harrows my feelings; such I marvel how such a belief could gained ground, knowing, as I do, the tense of the King's heart, and the efforts he ally made in the affair.

hat the wisest and most learned Princess ope should regret the fate of those men ius whom I have named, does not surprise

and that beauty will be clouded is the most perfect God has n five hundred years!"

Here the ambassador was so emotion that he paused, while flashed with gratified vanity.

"I am sorry," said she, "th mistaken this affair, and attrib the King so different to the tru

"Gracious Madam," resume rently recovering himself, "protion of my master's innocence his foes. Let me supplicate the collected at Plymouth and Fadispersed. Why should the of gomery emulate the conduct miral, and embroil by his in nations, formed to love each oth

" Hold !" said Elizabeth 1

he powers whom they offend treat them as pirates, and punish them accordingly. But ask not to abridge the liberties of Englishmen, which I am proud to see flourish and increase."

She looked proudly round upon her couriers, from whom a murmur of applause arose. Ondi did not allow the slightest expression to dicate his annoyance, and went on to offer the greetings of the Queen-mother, and name er desire to present tokens of her friendship.

"The Queen has commissioned," he said,
Messire René Bianco to bear to your Majesty
few trifles, which, being rare, she hoped might
Please your eye for a moment."

"I thank her infinitely," replied the Queen:
the fame of Messire René's taste and talent
has already reached me, and I am happy to see
him here."

René then advanced, and kneeling, with an expression of profound humility, at her feet, offered several presents of esteemed essences, prepared by his hand, and several pairs of those embroidered and perfumed gloves, which were then so highly esteemed. "I have," he ventured to remark, "in charge from my august Mistress a saddle of curious construction, which has been arranged under my directions; if the most graceful horsewoman in the world would

condescended to use."

"Let it be shown me, pray with pleased impatience. "I heartily for this, for I have so manship, like herself. Doe now?"

"Since the accident, when bling, she received a sever Grace," answered René, "has which should characterise a was considered the finest mar ed steed of any princess living, eclipsed all in that accomplish other."

"You Frenchmen are all fi Queen playfully.

"Nay, Madam," returned a savage and an idiot, the sight as dazzle me at this moment soul, never before called fort which envelopes me."

" Gondi " said the vain Ou

can be called so in your Majesty's pre-

René, you must give me a specimen of r art," said Elizabeth: "we will have a sen few to-night in my cabinet, and tax your ers."

Alas! Madam," said René, putting on a urbed appearance, "I shall not dare —"

Away!" said Elizabeth, tapping him with fan, one of the presents which she had just ned, of Catherine: "You are to obey, and I ommand."

Ah!" whispered De Retz, "who would not y such sweet commands as issue from those of ruby? Pardon me, Madam; these are my own words: there is a devoted Prince o used them in speaking of the lady of his ration; he who has adopted for his mottods which faintly express his feelings!—ows the fairest of creation, what knight e at a certain tournament, the motto, 'Seræternum, dulcis quem torquet Eliza?'"

lizabeth blushed.—"You must tell me," said in a low voice, "more of the Duke njou privately; here we are observed, and hose inimical, I grieve to say."

he saddle which René had brought was examined, and commented upon with great

and complimentary devices in the flowers, formed of coloure the pummel of plain velvet, the model which Catherine de self introduced some years be she sat on horseback, to exhi the perfect beauty of her foo which, as well as that of her ha had been remarkable.

After much more complime his leave, being appointed by tend her, together with René, i

Meantime, Captain Florio he had a friend, who after man a similar nature to those expremarkable adventurer himself favourite physician of the E. This man's name was Giulio; of Milan, and in cunning little inferior to René Bianco made himself very useful to

e Queen's real or assumed willingness to to the proposals of the French King's er; and filled with anger and disappointhe lent an ear to the propositions of atholic party, who held out to him the ages of assisting their plans for Mary , who, should she succeed in establishing ht to the crown, by means of her foreign , would be a more eligible alliance than eth herself. It was represented to him, hould Elizabeth consent to marry the of Anjou, the measure would give so dissatisfaction to her Protestant subjects, r popularity would be greatly decreased, eir chances rise in proportion. He was ng betwen the two opinions at the period di's arrival; and the good reception given added to the late advancement to the s favour of the accomplished Sir Chris-Hatton, altogether had so roused his y that he vowed to execute some signal nce on both her and her favourites.

io, therefore, found him in a proper to listen to the schemes of Catherine, nicated by Florio, and he consented to a aid in advancement of a plan to get the into the power of France, and to release rom her confinement.

accept the invitation, which shi Leicester and others, ostensib herself and the ambassador fro when the festivities were at the attention of all engaged, t be weighed, and the royal prize the opposite shore, where her make whatever terms they plea

However daring this proposa cester in his anger and mor upon it as a means of gratifyi ings, and almost without allow for reflection he blindly enter and immediately busied hims means to execute it.

Gondi heard with much ples cess of the negociation of Flo with René to the Queen, in that day, resolved to gain he every art of which he was mas id the people.

you, René," said the Queen, "must ir old mistress for a new one who will you as much; we will make a court of rning, and the arts, equal to that of neess Marguerite. Ronsard must visit all your Pleiad, and politics and ambile be banished from our minds."

of these romantic visions the Queen mood to listen to any proposition of and when she was solicited to honour presence the fête which the Earl of had prepared, the novelty of its taking board of a vessel pleased her imagi-

ll be dressed," said she to her ladies, goddess of the sea, and you shall all ie as my nymphs of the watery ele-My locks shall flow gracefully over my s, a green mantle embroidered with



shall see him here as soon from the trammels of the sie cupies him."

"Does your Majesty mea chelle?" asked one of the l poor Protestant brethren ar their walls, waiting for promi England?"

"What raven note is this? sharply; "can I never enjoy tion without being checked reminded of misfortune?"

"Your Majesty will need tomed to reproof," said the boldly; "if you throw away your love upon a Catholic I he gains power will not fail i is his friendliness to the poo tants in both countries." ishe tried to shake off in vain, until the arrived when she was to repair to the l which was to afford her a new style of ement.

w and bright was the morning of the ined festivity, and the heights of Dover were led to witness the gay spectacle: numerhips decorated in the most gorgeous manay at anchor, and one beyond the rest was antly adorned, which was to be the scene e plot. A number of Catholic gentlemen issembled in barges and boats, and all the s having been invited by Leicester, he careful to exclude those whom he cond to be too quick-sighted. The waymood of the Queen, offended at the freeof remark which those about her hazarded. ly favoured the plan, for she resolved that rave statesman or grim politician should admitted to disturb the tranquil delight ne fantastic scene which she imagined to elf.

he had already mounted her palfrey, which adorned with the beautiful saddle of é, whom she allowed to assist her, and hom she gave numerous smiles, much to jealous annoyance of her other favourwho stood aloof. De Retz, splendidly

whom were conspicuous Flor band of foreigners of all no who had escaped from Pari attempted assassination of t joined his former friend on t now one of his party. Biand Queen, carefully attending to of her robe, and instructing he accustom her delicate and ny he continued to call it, to the how to repose her limbs, who to every celestial beauty we furnished, with the greatest of fortably constructed saddle.

In this fashion, they were p the acclamations of the peop delighted at the quaint attire towards the harbour; when a served amongst the attendants and left passage for a horsen the same moment. "Read, Madam, read!"
all he could utter, as, throwing himself from his horse, he knelt at her feet, and placed his hand upon her robe.

Elizabeth, astonished and confused, took the per, and ran her eye hastily over its conts, which were these:

"Gracious lady and mistress, —You are beayed by Gondi and his myrmidons. The vesel on board of which you venture will weigh
nchor the moment you have entered: the plan
to sail with you prisoner to France. Turn your
bridle instantly. Your faithful servant is close
thand to explain all. For the love of God
and your country avoid the snare!—hasten back
to Greenwich, and save England!

" Montgomery."

A panic instantly took possession of Elizabeth, on whom warnings were seldom thrown away; a thousand doubts, fears, and suspicions tashed on her mind, and her resolution was taken in a moment. "Thanks, good friend," she cried to the horseman at her feet, as she turned her palfrey so suddenly as almost to overturn René; who, stumbling against the panting messenger, perceiving that all was dis-

gave her so rude a shock that turned pale. Leicester, seeing pened, and that there was 'now complishing the plan in agitati ward, and in a loud voice c guards to surround their Queen "If there is treason, we wi said he: "stand back, all but of our adored Lady, and let her But Elizabeth, with a scorr her hand, recovered her compe and spurring her palfrey galle way she had come, without one she reached her temporary abo she would not dismount: an mantle over her dress, ordered and all her suite to follow imme destination was to her palace without delay: after which direct

tinued her route, and never dre

pared to take their way back to their resice; but the crowd soon got scent of the h, and rage and indignation took possession every mind. The messenger, as he rose is the ground, caught a glimpse of the face his assailant, René, and close beside him, of Maurevel.

Blessed Heaven!" cried he, "the murderof the Admiral close to the Queen!"

he word flew like wild-fire, and loud cries The murderers of the Admiral!" "the ssins of Coligni!" "the butchers of St. tholomew!" made the air re-echo. Maul, in mortal terror, rushed towards the seapursued and pelted; and, half dead with or and bodily injury, was received on board ne of the French boats, which rowed off as as possible to their vessels.

tené, also, hooted and reviled, was rescued a some difficulty from the mob by the solis; and Florio and his men, to whom the senger directed attention as some of the st of the assassins of Paris, were obliged house themselves as quickly as possible, thing could exceed the vexation of Gondi; he thought it prudent to brave the accuons which might be made, and instantly owed the Queen to Greenwich, determined



embarked directly, and set sau same afternoon, leaving the o to smooth the difficult path of

When Queen Elizabeth within her palace walls she se freely, and began to conside position in which she had bee consequences. In the midst, alarm and resentment, she d presence of mind or her pr solved calmly to investigate day after her return the arriv de Montgomery was announce ordered him to be instantly usl So great was his emot sence. her, that he could scarcely re and the Queen herself was sen meeting him.

"I have no words, De Lorg

contemplation? If so, some of my own jects must be implicated."

This treacherous plot," said Montgomery, from the fruitful mind of Catherine, the en-mother. I received information of it those I can trust; and when I heard was the ambassador, and who his comions. I felt no doubt of the truth of the stateit. Let me entreat you, Madam, neither to r or to use any articles of dress sent you as sents: they have proved fatal to many, and tion in this case is of the utmost importance." I shall take heed of this," replied Elizabeth, ng off her embroidered gloves, and throwing m from her; "all that was sent to me from nce shall be destroyed instantly, -even to splendid saddle which I will use no more." I thank your Majesty," said Montgomery. othing but treachery is to be expected from ry member of the house of Valois, as long as arch enemy of our religion, Catherine, reigns reme. Oh! Madam, let not my prayers be , when I supplicate you to espouse the teous cause, and give your sanction to the rts its friends are ready to make. The chellois are daily in danger of falling vics to delay; massacre and starvation are

pausing.

"Give but your private s Madam," exclaimed De Lorg have vessels and money, if I and it may not be yet too lat but be pleased to consent to could at this moment commatwenty-two thousand foot an horse, which the Protestant no try of your Majesty's realm wo aid, and maintain for six mone expense."

"Indeed!" said Elizabeth.

"Yes, Madam," returned he would levy money if England eighteen thousand men could France; and our cause, the c would triumph over its invetera "The time is not yet come,"

"it is not ripe. You want a le

ay be done. I cannot, at this juncture, o quarrel with France."

at La Rochelle will be lost!" cried

"returned Elizabeth, "not if you succour, De Lorges, — give me no details, nor for consent. I can no farther help you; have my prayers for your success."

ed to be satisfied with this concession, mery overwhelmed the Queen with and, quitting the Court with as little s possible, hastened back to Plymouth, is lost no time in putting his vessels to d hoped, at length, to be able to afford on and assistance to the besieged town ochelle.

beth did not refuse to listen to the artful y of Gondi, who affected the most commorance of the cause of her sudden re, concluding, he said, that some imaffairs had called for her return to her

xcused the absence of René, as well as it, and contrived by flattery and adroit itation so well to quiet her fears, that an to suspect either that Montgomery in deceived in his suspicions, or that he had employed this means of placing her an obligation, in order to obtain from h assistance for La Rochelle, for which he l long striven. Leicester, of course, stou nied the truth of the imputation; and beth was content to appear satisfied w parties.

Whatever her real belief might be, si frequently heard to say, when speak Gondi, that the King of France had no faithful and zealous servant than he dominions.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EARTHQUAKE.

Our thunders Shall rain their drift of bullets on this town.

King John.

THE Rochellois had seen, with great vexaon, the galleys of the enemy bringing along an ormous vessel, and placing it in such a posion as almost to command a part of the town. was of twelve hundred tons, and was called e Grand Carraque,-merely a hull, its masts d every part of it gone, leaving the deck a atform from whence they were enabled to fire to the town right and left, a circumstance hich caused infinite annovance to the beeged, besides its intercepting the navigation d preventing their receiving supplies by sea. everal attempts had been made to set it on e at low water, but without avail, as the emy had taken precautions which effectually evented such a catastrophe.

Anxiously did the inhabitants of the town, ery day pressed nearer and nearer, look for the arrival of the vessels of succour from the English coast, and they beheld with constendation new sails continually appearing, bearing the enemy's flag, and rendering the approach of the fleet of Montgomery, should be be also to obtain assistance, more and more difficult and hazardous.

La Nouë consented at length, with the same tion of the authorities of the town, to hold be casional parleys with the camp, as he began think accommodation would be better than protracted resistance. There was much opposition however, to this measure; and finding, that not withstanding all his recommendations, he could not convince them that it would be their bespolicy, he resolved to absent himself altogether and, retiring to the camp, use all the influence he possessed to obtain good terms for them.

Scarcely had La Nouë left them when messenger arrived who had been detained som time, and had reached the town with infinit difficulty: he brought letters from Montgomer and the deputies, who had been sent from I Rochelle to England, announced the certainty succours arriving shortly. Newlife and fresh co rage were inspired by this news, and the Rochellois resolved to prove to La Nouë that the were right in wishing to defend La Rochellois

the last. While they were full of rejoicand occupying themselves with the utst energy in preparing new defences, the holics, who appeared resolved daily to make e desperate efforts to reduce them, made of the most furious attacks which had vet en attempted. The affair lasted more than ae hours, and fierce was the conflict. While e besieged were in the midst of the fray, thing with the most determined valour, Alix ad Lesselline, gazing from their high tower, sheld a sight which filled them with anxiety. small English-built vessel was descried sailng with all speed through the very centre of ne Catholic fleet, and though fired at on all ides, came rushing along the waters like a ea-bird, and entered the harbour of La Rohelle amidst the shouts of those who were atching its motions with breathless eagerness.

The bell of the tower was instantly rung with yful violence by the two delighted friends, and a merry peal announced to the townsmen the appy arrival of part of the expected fleet. It was und that it contained a good supply of powder ad corn, and brought news that several others, milarly provided, were on their way.

Night after night had Alix and Lesselline ept watch in the tower, and at length, quite vol. II.

wearied out, they consented to abandon their post and retire to their home, while other ladies. equally devoted, took their place. They could not bear to be separated, and De Hommet, who was constantly engaged in the siege, was happy that his wife and daughter had so great a comfort as the society of Alix afforded. His anxiety for his family grew daily more intense, and he dreaded the slow but sure approach of that scarcity which this long-protracted siege threatened. Claude and Belcastel were in the same troop as himself, and his friendship for the two gallant young men increased with the actions which they were constantly performing. They were actively employed one night, during a short pause of hostilities, in repairing a terrace in the hospital garden, near De Hommet's house, which the falling-in of a mine had destroyed. The enemy, always on the alert, became aware of the work, and resolved if possible to put a stop to it: accordingly, they placed their cannon opposite to the Porte neuve, behind the hospital, and quite unexpectedly commenced a heavy fire. Several men were killed, and the balls were thrown with fearful precision; suddenly De Hommet uttered a loud exclamation.

"My children! my poor wife!" said he,

"they will be sacrificed !-yonder is my house in flames!"

"Good God!" cried Belcastel; "and tonight all the ladies are within it!"

There was not a moment to lose, the firing still continued, and it was necessary to return it against the besiegers: no one could leave his post, and the destruction of the family of De Hommet seemed inevitable.

"Claude," said Belcastel, "within that house are at this moment in the most fearful danger two beings dearer to us than life, the daughter and the niece of De Hommet; behold him defending this spot with all his energies, while he gazes with agonies on the blazing ruins of his hearth. Better commit a breach of duty than see all we love perish before our eyes. If we save them we may yet return in time to assist here; if not, we shall have fallen too."

Claude, equally eager to attempt the rescue of Alix and her relations, at once agreed to the proposition, and, calling to De Hommet, that they would soon return, rushed together from the walls. De Hommet angrily insisted on their remaining, but they were already out of hearing.

"Can I have been deceived in these men?" he exclaimed; "does their courage fail them at the last? To desert me in such a moment!— Courage, friends! stand to your guns: we shall be too much for them yet!"

So saying, his little band continued to keep up a brisk fire against the besiegers, who appeared to have been reinforced, and were now advancing with ladders towards the dilapidated terrace.

Meanwhile Claude and Belcastel had reached the house, which now sent up from every side columns of flame to the skies; — within, shrieks and cries were heard, and a female shortly afterwards appeared at a window, holding an infant in her arms.

- "Save my child!" she cried in piteous accents.
- "It is De Hommet's wife, the mother of Lesselline," cried Belcastel, climbing hastily towards the balcony.

"Throw the child to me," he cried, while the mother, frantic with terror, obeyed, and the screaming infant fell upon his breast; he let himself drop upon the pavement, and giving it to one of the crowd, who were surrounding the house, rushed towards the door, which, with the help of Claude and several others was at length forced. Both hurried along the passage, and directed by the screams of females above reached the room where the cousins were sitting clasped in each other's arms: they had been roused by the firing without, and had risen in haste in order to be ready in case of their services at the hospital being required.

The flames at that moment burst furiously into the chamber; all rushed to the window. Lesselline was in the arms of Belcastel, who looked out with desperate hope; it was not very far from the ground; but how to reach it with his fainting burthen? There was an iron pipe which ran from the top of the house to the bottom, and he felt sure that he could slide down without injury alone.

"Can you clasp me firmly, dear Lesselline," said he; "bind your scarf round us both for greater security, and tempt the trial."

This was instantly done, the terrified girl clung closely to him, and, standing on the edge of the window-ledge, he seized the pipe, now heated with the increasing fire, and sprang forth; with frightful rapidity he descended, his hands blistered by the burning iron, and just as his feet rested on the ground the arms of Lesselline gave way, and they fell together amongst the smoking ruins below; a dreadful crash was then heard, and, as he tore asunder the slight bond that bound them, and raised Lesselline gave way and they fell together

selline insensible in his arms, he saw that the roof had fallen in.

Claude meanwhile, when he reached the door through which the flames were bursting, saw the impossibility of escape that way: he returned to Alix, who with anxious looks was watching the perilous descent of her cousin.

"Where is her mother? my poor aunt!" said she distractedly. "Oh! Claude, think not of me!—the infants! there are three of them, and their mother! what can be done to save them?"

"Perhaps at the back of the house we might escape!" cried Claude. "This way!" But as he spoke the crash which followed the descent of Belcastel and his charge came with awful sound. In a moment the roof fell, and buried them beneath it.

All was now darkness; a suffocating heat spread around, and Claude felt that the form he had instinctively clasped was inanimate. He strove to call aloud, but his voice was powerless; he tried to move, but felt hot substances pressing closely on every side! A hideous sound almost stunned him: there was a roar as of thunder, mixed with what seemed the loud report of cannon, human voices, shrieks and cries: it seemed impossible to exist many moments in this situation; he

struggled violently, but in vain; — he gasped for breath to call on his beloved Alix, who, motionless and silent, replied not to his pressure. A thousand thoughts whirled through his brain: De Hommet struggling with the assailants at the breach; the cannon, the shrieks, the blood of St. Bartholomew's eve; the boatman and the stranger he rescued; and the same female form he had once before seen in a dream — all flitted past as if real and tangible. "I escaped all this," he mentally exclaimed, "and must perish here with her, whom no exertions of mine could save! To die with her is a blessing!—but that her fate should be so horrible!"

He felt his brain reel, his strength giving way; a burning pain seized his limbs, a parching thirst devoured him, and he was losing all consciousness, when a flash, broad, bright, and glowing, suddenly illumined the spot where he stood, to reveal its horrors. He saw that a pile of ruins was round him: two enormous beams had fallen, and in falling crossed each other over his head, forming an arch, which had preserved him; and he hoped for a moment that Alix was yet living, though still she stirred not. Scarcely, however, could he form this idea, before a second and a third flash poured a flood of radiance into his prison.

"This is no cannon's flash," exclaimed be inwardly; "it is the artillery of heaven!"

The last vivid forked ray was followed by a peal of thunder, so loud, so awful, that he shrank appalled. Then a crash, and deafening explosion, and the wall was rent asunder, falling forward, as if dashed aside by a supernatural hand.

He breathed, he spoke, he called aloud, and he felt the heart of Alix beat beneath his hand; torches gleamed round, and numerous figures flitted about. Presently he heard the sound of voices, and these words struck on his ear:—

"They are saved! Behold them there, below,—behind that heap of brick and rubbish! Claude! Alix! speak! Answer, for the love of Heaven!"

"We are living! I am unhurt!" cried Claude; "but Alix!"

Fifty hands were extended to assist them, and in less time than it takes to tell it they were rescued from their perilous position, and Alix received into the arms of her cousin.

"But, my children! my babes!" cried De Hommet, who came rushing forward from the ruins of his late dwelling. "Have any seen them? Are they saved?"

Search was made, but in vain: no traces

could be found of the infants. Their mother, after Belcastel had saved her youngest child, had been rescued by some daring soldiers, who, directed by him, contrived to place ladders against a wall, where she was seen standing, without being able to tell how she had reached that position. The agony of the father was extreme, for there was every reason to fear the two children and their nurse had perished.

Bewildered with the rapidity of these events, Claude entreated Belcastel to explain what had occurred.

He related, that as soon as he had borne Lesselline to a place of safety, with a neighbour, and directed the men to search for Madame de Hommet and the rest, he had hurried back to the rampart, which they had left defended by De Hommet and his small band. He found that the firing had continued with violence, and as he rushed along perceived that a ladder was placed against the breach, and an officer had at that instant reached the topmost step, sword in hand, and encouraging his men to follow ;-De Hommet stood in the gap, and made a blow at the officer, who staggered and fell; but another took his place instantly, and before De Hommet could have had time to parry, the thrust must have pierced his body had not Belcastel, springing forward, received the weapon on his own. A furious encounter then ensued; but the officer, who was strong and skilful, pressed the brave but inexperienced student so fiercely that a few moments must have decided his fate, when the whole sky was suddenly illumined by repeated flashes of vivid lightning, and a peal of thunder, which far exceeded the report of a hundred cannon, came rolling through the air; the shock of an earthquake had struck the walls, and the assailants were hurled into the space beyond, while falling houses round told the ruin which attended the mighty effort of convulsed nature.

The besiegers, perceiving that more than mortal aid was with their foes, retired in consternation, having lost several valuable officers and more than a hundred men. De Hommet was not wounded, nor was Belcastel; and the loss on their side was very trifling.

After the tremendous shock which had burst open the walls of the prison of ruins, where Claude and Alix were pent, the storm subsided, and its effects alone remained to prove that the whole had not been a dream.

The unfortunate mother, whose senses had left her for a time, was attended with the most anxious care by her weeping daughter. Alix

had received no other bodily injury than a few bruises; but her nerves were much shaken, and a fever was the consequence of the peril and terror to which she had been exposed, added to the state of agitation which, for the last few months, she had endured.

Claude, in the mean time, had not been unmindful of his prisoner La Mole, to whose comfort and accommodation he had carefully attended. When he entered the apartment allotted to him the day after the earthquake, he found him on his knees, anxiously engaged in perusing a manuscript book, which Claude recognised as one of a description then in high esteem, namely, a work on divination. He turned round as Claude entered, and rising haughtily requested that he might not be disturbed.

"I am not accustomed to hold parleys with my grooms," said La Mole, scornfully, "and desire to be delivered from all communication with you."

"That you can scarcely be," said Claude, "as you are my prisoner; and perhaps, when you hear that the place I held in your house-hold was but a means of disguise, you will feel less repugnance to the holding a short converse with one who claims nevertheless little in common with you, either in rank or habits. I was entrusted by the Catholic King with a commission to take away your life. You are aware whether I took advantage of my situation, even though I found you to have deeply injured one whom I was bound to assist. I rescued your prisoner, and restored her to her friends; and I now come to you, requiring your word no farther to molest her or her family, before I pronounce that you are free to return whither you may desire."

"Young man," said La Mole, "you have related several things which I own considerably surprise me First, that the little mad heretic whom I took from René should, in any way, be connected with you; next, that having so good an opportunity of revenge, independently of the chance of a good reward, you should have allowed it to slip from you. As for the kind intentions of the King towards me, I had before shrewd suspicions of them, and shall know how to requite his Grace. For my liberty, I am ready to obtain it by resigning entirely the fair possessed, about whom I am quite indifferent, and for whose sake I have no wish to enter the lists with menials and barbers."

"My Lord," said Claude, "you must swear it on the word of a knight, and you are free, and shall be the first to bear to the camp the message of the Rochellois, who consent to consider of the terms last proposed to them, which, since we have become the stronger, we find are infinitely more reasonable than those the King has been hitherto pleased to offer. So known an enemy to the Protestant party is not, I fear, entirely safe in this town; and I recommend as speedy a departure as possible."

"It is likely," said La Mole, coolly, "that your party may not consider me always an enemy. There are other foes, who have, perhaps, stronger claims on me; and they shall not wait long."

Claude had little difficulty in comprehending his meaning, as he knew him to be a zealous friend of the Duke of Anjou.

And however unworthy either the Duke or La Mole might be, their assistance, if hereafter joined to the power of Henry of Navarre, was not to be neglected; and Claude parted with his prisoner pleased with the hope of having secured him to the Huguenot party. He promised that he should be set at liberty in the course of a few days, and La Mole resolved that his sojourn should for the present be as far from the camp or the court as possible.

CHAPTER XVI.

Les Rochelois ont planté Le glorieux fondement De l'antique liberté.

Popular Song of the Time

THE rage of the Catholic party was extreme at the frequent failures they experienced, and the introduction into the besieged town of supplies in spite of all their vigilance. New attempts were made from day to day, but with little gain to themselves and little loss to their foes. Still they were aware, not only that Montgomery's fleet could not approach, but that he had been obliged to abandon the enterprise, and had returned to England, hoping to induce the Queen, by a representation of the deplorable state of the Protestants, to alter her determination, and grant him ships capable of attacking those with which the Catholics had filled the port of La Rochelle.

A short truce was agreed on, but was so ill kept by the Catholics, that being soon dissolved hostilities recommenced more furiously than ever.

that the question was public ther it was advisable for the who was known to have tak in the affair, to be elected The persuasions, and artful Monluc, Protestant Bishop ture of Catherine's, had, how had the desired effect; for, the of her favourite son was to h vet, once elected, she felt th rejection for such a cause w racter throughout Europe; a the enmity of Charles to h undisguised that she feared Henry's remaining in Franc Charles had become impatien siege, and irritable from illne stings of remorse. He desire things, that his brother shou try or he killed at the sieg

employ René, as a more fitting instrument than Claude to accomplish his designs. The latter accepted with pleasure an office so congenial to him; and, on his arrival at La Rochelle, was deeply annoyed to find himself again foiled, by learning of the capture of La Mole, the escape of Claude, and of the lady, whom he easily guessed to be Alix.

On delivering the King's instructions to the King of Poland, that Prince was ill pleased to see that they were in a spirit friendly to the Rochellois; and, as he had projected one more vigorous effort to gain the fame which he wanted to dazzle the Poles, he determined to keep back the orders for the present, and commanded René to remain at a distance from the camp, and not to appear till sent for; when, according to the success of his last trial, he should appear to act upon the orders which the Italian was then supposed to bring. He imagined that the Rochellois were now lulled into false security, and, from their exhausted and harassed state, would be unable to sustain an assault made with all his forces. The loss of life was to him no consideration, and, provided he could conquer the foes, for whom he now entertained a personal hatred, he cared not at what sacrifice he procured the pleasure.

It had been agreed that for the space of six

days no works should go on, on either side: and the Rochellois, always faithful to their word, desisted from any labours, and reposed from their toils, thus gaining a little strength, and recovering their spirits, and hoping that the answer of the King would at length be favourable. Alix was so much better, that she was able occasionally to resume her post of watcher; and the family of De Hommet, though deeply shocked and grieved by their melancholy loss, yet, actuated by the patriotic spirit which inspired every inhabitant of the town, endeavoured to shake off their sorrow, and forget their individual distress in exertions for their fellowsufferers: for theirs was not the only house which had been destroyed on the night of the earthquake, and many families beside had to deplore the loss of those dearest to them. There had been a question as to the propriety of calling the young students to account for the desertion of their post under any temptation, but the services they had rendered on so many occasions, overcame the scruples of their officers, who, in consideration of their being unacquainted with the strict rules of war. consented to pardon their fault-one which De Hommet's eloquence, with little difficulty, converted into a virtue.

The inhabitants of the closely pressed town, who, for so many months had not been able to pause from their exertions for a day, enjoyed the recreation of walking on their walls, and gazing peaceably over the adjacent country; but as they did so, and watched the preparations for a hunting match in the camp, where all seemed careless gaiety, as the soldiers lounged along behind their gabions, and within their prescribed limits, they became aware that the pioneers were busily engaged, and a suspicion of treachery instantly took possession of their minds. To prevent the Catholics from perceiving their knowledge, they made their women and children continue to promenade in the open places, in the view of the camp, and in the meanwhile every man resumed his former occupations; so that at the end of the truce they were fully prepared to receive their besiegers.

Morning had scarcely dawned on the sixth day, when the Rochellois beheld an immense body of the hostile troops advancing; and their batteries began playing with such force against the strong boulevard de l'Evangile, that, however aware of their intention, the besieged with difficulty stood the first shock. An enormous breach was made, and but for the surprise of the Catholics to find their foes so completely on

their guard, the fate of the day might have been doubtful; but their confidence received a check, and the boldness and desperate resistance which they encountered considerably abated the hopes which the King of Poland's exhortations had inspired. They were driven back with the loss of four hundred men, and the Dukes of Mayenne and Nevers wounded. A second and third time they were equally unsuccessful, owing to the destruction of a casemate from which they drew numerous advantages. This work they were obliged to reconstruct, and the Count de Lude led his whole body of infantry once more to the breach.

Furious and desperate now became the contest, and the assailants conceived their success certain, when, with a tremendous explosion, part of the angle of the boulevard blew up. But not a man started from his post, not a hand was unsteady, as resolutely blocking up the enormous breach the Rochellois successfully resisted all attempts, and after an useless assault of three hours the trumpets of the Duke de Biron sounded a retreat.

Notwithstanding this repulse, and though they had sustained such loss the next day, the battery was recommenced against the long resisting boulevard. So powerful were the means employed and so determinedly was the attack conducted, that it was evident the strength of the whole army was directed to the accomplishment of this main object.

At length the fosse became heaped with the ruins of the battered walls, and two wide breaches were effected, through which the entrance to the town seemed open; but, to the surprise of the enemy, they found the entrenchments behind so strong, and so well flanked by the industry of the soldiers during the attack, that the new defence was more formidable than the old.

Rendered furious by this disappointment, the Count de Lude led on his men to the counterscarp of the Port St. Nicholas, while new troops
poured in upon the Evangile. The Rochellois began to faint; such repeated attacks allowed them no breathing time, and the report
of the fosse being filled with ruins, spreading
through the lines, carried panic along with it:
the shouts of the enemy soon proclaimed
that both these strongholds were in their power;
Claude and Belcastel were fighting, side by
side, defending the entrance of one of the
breaches, when the cry of victory from the opposite party reached their ears.

"Comrades!" cried Claude; "without a desperate effort all is lost. Why fight we here merely on the defensive when yonder leaders are giving way? Follow me, and the day is yet our own!"

A shout from Belcastel and his company announced their willingness to attempt anything, however desperate. Exhorting those who remained, to be firm to their post, Claude rushed like lightning along the walls, insisting, entreating, commanding, and encouraging all.

"Yet another struggle!" cried he, "yet another, and La Rochelle is free. Desert not your post, brave soldiers, at the last decisive moment. On for the love of Heaven,—for your wives and children whose fate depends on you. Remember St Bartholomew!—La Rochelle and vengeance!"

The animation of his address, the fire of his eye, the rapidity of his movements as he rushed along, as if resolved to attempt the regaining the lost holds alone, recalled the scattered spirits of the soldiers. One universal cry of "La Rochelle and victory!—St. Bartholomew and vengeance!" resounded along the walls, and in a few minutes L'Evangile and the gate of St. Nicholas were once more possessed by the victorious Rochellois. The besiegers, driven back

with great slaughter, leaped from the walls, rushed through the breaches, and piled the fosse with dead and wounded.

The victory of the brave Rochellois was complete, and the remains of the late numerous army, with immense loss, returned to the camp.

Greatly were the successful besieged astonished to hear in the evening of that day, for five successive hours, both by land and by sea, repeated bursts of artillery, as if in rejoicing for some signal victory. More than two hundred and fifty reports of cannon were heard, and various were the conjectures raised as to the cause. While they were busied in questioning each other, a white pennon was suddenly seen flying from the top of the tour de Moreilles where Alix kept watch, and soon after were observed advancing rapidly, without attempt at molestation from the vessels of the enemy, several small ships which, taking their course direct into the harbour, were received with shouts of greeting. They were amply loaded with biscuit, corn, flour, fish, and every kind of provision, of all of which the half-starving population stood eminently in need.

They were not long in receiving a message from La Nouë, who informed them that the rejoicings they heard were in consequence of 360

the arrival of the Polish Ambassadors at the camp, and the proclamation of Henry as King of Poland. That King Charles, in honour of the event, had sent down by a special courier, to proclaim peace throughout the cantons, and to grant to the Rochellois all their demands.

This joyful news was speedily confirmed by the arrival of La Nouë himself, who entered the town amidst the joyful greeting of the inhabitants, followed soon after by the Duke de Biron, his staff, and a herald-at-arms, who confirmed, by sound of trumpet in every part of the town, the peace which they had so hardly earned. After this, a grand banquet, prepared in all haste, was given to the late besiegers, at the Mayoralty; the soldiers of each party embracing and welcoming each other, and every demonstration of amity given and received.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE

QUEEN'S POISONER;

OR,

FRANCE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

A ROMANCE.

BY LOUISA STUART COSTELLO.

AUTHOR OF "A SUMMER AMONGST THE BOCAGES AND THE VINES,"

"SPECIMENS OF THE RABLY POETRY OF FRANCE," ETC.

Good men's lives

Expire before the flowers in their caps,

Dying or ere they sicken.

Macheth.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1841.



THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

CHAPTER I.

PLOTTING.

It fits us then to be as provident As fear may teach us.

Henry V.

The struggle maintained on both sides with so much obstinacy was at length concluded, and all haste seemed to be instantly made to finish that which had been so abruptly stopped, and to get rid at once of the contention. The King of Navarre and the Prince of Condé lost no time in hastening from a scene which was distressing to their feelings. The King of Poland hurried to the Isle of Oleron, to await the Edict of Pacification, and to give audience to the Polish Ambassadors,—all the noblesse departed as quickly as possible,—the remnant of the immense army began to disperse,—the mer-

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chants packed up their goods, and the camp was dissolved.

Small honour had been gained, and great loss incurred, by the ill-advised and cruel policy that counselled the siege; in which no less than eighty thousand men had perished by the sword or by sickness. Charles, terrified at the effect which might be made on the Polish nation, more than half-inclined to reject their newly-elected monarch, was resolved, as quickly as he could, to do away with the impression Henry of Valois's want of success must occasion. The rigour shown in so many recent instances was looked on throughout Europe with disgust and reprehension, and it appeared absolutely requisite that this disagreeable feeling should be effaced.

Catherine's hopes that some of those she considered her enemies would perish in the contest, were disappointed; instead of which many excellent officers and a large body of men had fallen a sacrifice, and her beloved son was more than once wounded. The mission of René had failed, which inspired Charles with bitter feelings, and, on the whole, the most gloomy and unquiet thoughts reigned in the breasts of the ruling powers on the breaking-up of the siege of La Rochelle.

La Mole, as soon as he quitted his prison, made haste to conceal himself and his discomfiture in one of his country-houses in Provence, -resolved to make his absence regretted by the fair ones of Paris, and to cause some sighs from Margaret of Navarre. His friend Coconnas accompanied him, and it was not long before they were joined by the Duke d'Anjou, the Marshals de Montmorenci and Cossi, and others, when that conspiracy was formed which so soon afterwards cost their lives to the prime movers of the affair. It was arranged that, to prevent suspicion, La Mole and the rest should go to Paris and be present at the fêtes projected in honour of the election of the King of Poland; which, under the direction of the Queen-mother, were to be of the most magnificent description, the poet Dorat being engaged to compose the masques, and to record the solemnities. Much treachery and many deep designs were communicated at this meeting, as having been discovered in various ways; not only did La Mole recount what he had learned from Claude of the King's intentions towards him, but it was found that in case of success at La Rochelle, a deep plot had been laid to get rid of all those inimical to the Queenmother and the King of Poland. In particular, that Du Guast, the reigning favourite of Henry, had undertaken to assassinate the King of Navarre with his own hand,—that the Duke de Guise and Catherine had entered into a compact to destroy those whom they considered dangerous to their views,—that Charles had his emissaries, whose intentions were as well known, and, in fact, that a second St. Bartholomew had alone been prevented by the brave defence of the Rochellois, and the consequent necessity of raising the siege.

The Prince de Condé, who had been informed of the numerous letters and messengers sent from the camp to his young wife by the King of Poland, felt his pride alarmed, and resolved to withdraw the object of this dangerous affection from the neighbourhood of the unprincipled Prince, and Marie was therefore compelled to leave Chenonceau, and accompany her husband to Normandy; where, though strict watch was kept over him by the royal party, he was yet permitted, for a time, to visit his government; the Queen-mother having perceived with vexation that the passion of her son had become more violent and lasting than she thought his volatile nature would have permitted. As she knew that Marie. notwithstanding her youth and simplicity, was possessed of great genius and determination, which in after years might be dangerous, she was glad to find the means of removing a rival whose power she dreaded, looking forward as she did to the time when, Henry reigning, she should be all in all, provided she could unite him in marriage with some less attractive and less gifted princess. She had already decided in her own mind that Louise de Lorraine, daughter of the Duke de Mercœur, her own connection, would be a fitting match, and she took her measures accordingly. By favouring the house of Lorraine she weakened that of Bourbon, and her dread that Henry would supplant her sons grew daily more and more vivid.

The grief of parting with her friend, and leaving the Court without beholding her lover, threw the unfortunate Marie into a fever, and when she arrived at her solitary château in Normandy, she was laid up on a bed of sickness.

The King of Poland, on finding her absent, was deeply chagrined, and vented so many reproaches on his mother for not having prevented it, that she the more congratulated herself on the circumstance. To soothe him, she promised to forward his views in every way,

and bade him rely on her to facilitate their marriage when he once became King of France.

As for the Queen of Navarre, she was inconsolable at the loss of Marie: and the return of her husband, in whose palace at Paris she was now expected to reside, brought her little happiness; for his coldness to her, and his inconstancy and carelessness in matters of gallantry, had become a common theme. designs he was forming with his friends he concealed beneath this exterior, and Marguerite was herself deceived when she saw him entering, with apparent enjoyment, into all the dissipation of the time. To follow his example seemed the only course left her; and none to behold her, brilliant, beautiful, and gay, acting a conspicuous part in the magnificent entertainments given to the ambassadors of Poland, could have guessed the disappointment and bitterness of her heart. She, with all the most beautiful and most fascinating ladies of the Court, accompanied the King of Poland, on his way to his new dominions, as far as Blamont in Champagne.

The Queen-mother had persuaded King Charles to undertake the journey, although his health was failing fast, and at Vetry great fears were entertained for his life. He was attacked,

it was reported, by small-pox; but strange rumours were spread that the drugs of René Bianco, in which he appeared of late to have much faith, had not been found so salutary to his health as he imagined. His youth, however, prevailed, and the momentary expectations of Catherine, that Henry would not be obliged to quit the kingdom, were deceived. As long as possible, however, the King of Poland lingered. until at last Charles, observing his disinclination to depart, had recourse to threats and menaces to oblige him to quit France, and amidst the weeping and mourning of his mother and his friends the accomplished, profligate, and unprincipled Prince set out with the ambassadors for Warsaw.

Before he left, however, he solicited a private interview with Marguerite, in which he entreated her kind offices for him with Marie de Condé, informing her of his project to obtain the dissolution of her marriage, professing for herself the most unbounded affection, and begging her not to lose sight of his interests at Court. As she was much attached to him, although there were traits in his character of which she disapproved, she was sensibly affected at parting, and promised to aid his wishes by every means in her power.

On the manner of the Court towards Paris, the King, who was very weak, was obliged to cased showly: and while still in Champagne, it was discovered that a plan was on foot for the flight of the Duke of Anjon and Henry of Navarre, whose triends were posted in the neighbourhood, and ready to join them if they exuld once excape.

This plan, as is well known, was frustrated, and the Princes had to look forward for some time to a thraiding which was every day becoming more insupportable.

Through fair promines and good words were not spared to hall the victorious Rochellois into a faise security, yet the dignitaries of the town were far from giving implicit credit to the sudtion professions of friendship poured in upon them by those who had so lately shown themselves their bitter enemies; and all remained resolute on their guard against treachery.

Belcastel and Claude, equally the objects of gratitude and esteem to those whom they had so materially served, were not long in learning from each other their mutual secret. It appeared that the former had been for some time attached to Lesselline, the daughter of De Hommet; and as he was possessed of a small independence, her father had no reasons to advance against his happiness, considering him master of talents which promised success in whatever career he might pursue. The dower of Lesselline was considerable, and the sole objection which De Hommet urged was the youth of both parties, an argument which the eloquence of Belcastel so effectually subdued, that the union of the lovers was at length consented to, and the day fixed for the celebration of the event.

Claude, while he rejoiced in his friend's good fortune could not but compare it with his own situation with melancholy reflections. Alix shared his sadness, though she carefully concealed her feelings under an assumed gaiety, proper for the occasion of her cousin's marriage. Claude sought opportunities of seeing her alone, but could seldom do so except for a few moments; at length, on one occasion, he ventured to entreat a short hearing, and his request not being denied,—

"Alix," said he, "you once said that under other circumstances than those in which we were placed when I ventured to avow to you the feelings of my heart, I should have been heard with less coldness; you even said that you felt regret at our parting; might I hope the esteem with which you then honoured me is not abated?"

- "Claude," answered she, in a faltering voice,
 "I am here almost unprotected; ought you to
 remind me of a confession which—I mean of an
 acknowledgment—"
- "Dearest Alix," exclaimed he; "recall not that word which gives me hope. Hear me, at least, and forgive me if I say too much; you can command my silence—for ever if it pleases you. Believe me I presume not on your present situation:—did I address one word that might offend you while you trusted in the protection I was able to afford?"
- "No," replied Alix, turning on him a look of grateful affection; "no, Claude; I am to blame to require so much of you,—nay, why should I longer deceive you and myself by feigning an indifference which is so far from my heart? I need not,—I do not hesitate to tell you that you are dear to me; and that all the anxiety which you have experienced has been shared by me since our last—since our first meeting."
 - "Generous, beloved Alix!" cried he, pressing to his heart the hand she extended to him, "do not then again expose yourself to a separation fraught with danger,—let me be your guard —your protector, with none to question my

right. What do I ask? who am I that dare thus to address you? Yet, when I consider the numerous enemies of your peace—their power and evil designs, I cannot reproach my selfishness in urging the sacrifice of your hand to one so unworthy, except in devoted affection, as myself!"

She attempted to speak, but he continued with animation,—

"The President will pardon the step you have taken, since it secures his daughter's safety. He never could have desired your union with the wretch to whom he was constrained to abandon you."

"But my fatal promise!" cried Alix, turning pale, "to which so many were witness."

"It was extorted under circumstances of such horror that its fulfilment were profanation. Think not of it for a moment—let not the remembrance of the vile Bianco disturb your tranquillity—you will be safe from him; we will live far from the Court, and all its dangers and vices."

"But, Claude," said Alix, "I cannot abandon my father, and he will not give up the fatal fascination which dwells round the abode of royalty. Alas! he is not like De Hommet; and our being Protestants is a bar that—"

" Dwell not, I entreat," said her lover, " on

the difficulties that surround us:—think, dearest Alix, of your safety, and accept the protection of one who, however powerless in some respects, has at least a life to devote to you!"

"Believe me not," she answered, smiling through her tears, "so unworthy of your attachment as to consider such a reason necessary. My happiness and my safety depend equally on you, and dowerless and persecuted, I am but too unfitting a bride for one so generous and noble."

Claude at length succeeded in convincing her that there could be no possible objection to their union, and his ardent imagination, seeing nothing in the future but bright prospects, passed over all the dark shadows which were but too conspicuous in the foreground of the picture.

Belcastel and his intended bride heard with extreme pleasure that the day of their marriage was to be that of Alix and Claude; and De Hommet had neither power nor inclination to refuse such a reward to one of the deliverers of La Rochelle.

The happiness of the bridal party would have been complete, but that the sad loss of the two children of De Hommet had left a melancholy on the minds of all, which they could not banish. The eldest of the children, a boy of six years of age, had been the pride and delight of his parents, and was called the little rival of Claude, so attached had he become to Alix during her stay; the other was a girl about three years old, and a remarkably lovely, engaging child. Their nurse was a country girl from Croisic in Brittany, and greatly attached to them. All trace had been lost of their fate: the ruins were so extensive, that to dig amongst them was a work of time, and the confusion of the whole town was so great that the search had been abandoned.

De Hommet was gazing from the walls one morning, with a sad heart, recalling to his mind a thousand little traits of his beloved and lost children, when he observed a small sail approaching the sands at the foot of the tower from which he leaned. He watched it carelessly as it struggled through the waters and reached the shore, when a sound caught his ear which he never hoped to hear again — the sound of his own name in the accents of his son. He rushed down the stairs — flew towards the boat, and at the same moment clasped in his arms his two lost children, while their nurse stood

sobbing by his side. A brief explanation was soon given, and the overjoyed father, hurrying with his recovered treasure to the abode of Lesselline, spread joy and wonder round.

The bereaved mother was gently prepared for the sudden burst of happiness which awaited her, and it was in her presence that Fantik, the young nurse, told her story

"I was asleep," she said, "when the rattling of the balls startled me, and I got up and dressed myself as quickly as I could. two children, who were with me, began to cry, - and I was just as ready as they to do so,when my mistress, with the infant in her arms, rushed into the room screaming, and called to me to save the children. She was gone in a moment, and I, not knowing what I did, caught up the girl, and telling the boy to cling to me darted down the stairs, and fled into the yard behind the house. At that instant I heard a crash, and the flames rising in all directions; a great part of the garden wall was in ruins, and over them we scrambled. more dead than alive, and found ourselves on the ramparts. On I ran, the children clinging to me, till I came to the great breach which had been repairing the last few days; I looked down, and saw a rope dangling over --- by which

it seemed as if some one had lately descended. Afraid of nothing, in the agony in which I was, I clasped the child to my breast, and bade little Ippolite imitate what I did. I then clambered up the wall and laid hold of the rope; he, who was always like a monkey for his imitation, did the same, - and there we were, in a few moments, safe on the wet sand, with the tide coming up fast. On I hurried, till we got to the caves in the rock about a quarter of a mile along the grève, and there we rested for an hour; we began to be very cold and hungry, so I sallied forth, hoping to see some fishingboats that might give us help, and by good chance one came near where we were. fisherman was no other than my cousin Loisic, from my own town, and he bade us be of good cheer, for that he was bound back to Croisic, and would take us with him.

"We escaped the vessels of the enemy who were hovering about, and, after a voyage, stormy enough, got into harbour. We were received with welcome; and as soon as the good news of peace reached us, my cousin Loisic brought us all back."

This was the simple history, which gave new life to all who heard it, and completed the happiness of the joyous party assembled. Praises

16 THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

were showered upon Fantik, and an ample donation bestowed upon her cousin, who seemed to consider that his reward had already been paid in the gracious smiles of the courageous and pretty young nurse.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURTIER'S FATE.

And wee'll have hawkes and wee'll have houndes
To cover our intent,
And wee'll awaye to the green forest
As we a hunting went.

Marriage of Sir Gawain.

Les plus heureux portoient envie Aux felicités de ma vie ; Mais maintenant que je suis mort— Oh que Fortune est variable! Il n'y a nul si miserable Qui voulût envier mon sort.

Epitophe du jeune La Mole.

During the progress of the Court towards St. Germain, the indications of revolt among the Huguenots were so clearly manifested, and their opinions so boldly avowed, that suspicions were excited in the King's mind that they had unknown resources, and looked with confidence to leaders whose power they could not doubt.

The demands forwarded from Nismes and Montauban to Charles at Villers Coterets, confirmed the idea, and so much did the confidence of the Huguenots alarm and confuse the royal party, that no steps were immediately taken to counteract the danger that seemed threatening. But when the knowledge of continued risings and open meetings in all parts of the kingdom left no doubt of the existence of a formidable conspiracy, it became time to exert the authority and rigour which seemed for a time to have lain Catherine shrewdly suspected that these undisguised acts of hostility on the part of the Protestant party were but a scheme to withdraw attention from some deeper plot of rebellion, and her fears but too clearly pointed out the secret mover of these associations.

The Duke of Anjou had in fact placed himself at the head of a third party, who, while they acted in concert with the Huguenots, had their private views of aggrandisement and revenge. They called themselves Malcontens or Politiques, because the party was composed of all those who conceived themselves to have been ill-treated by the Court, and because their professed aim was to reform the abuses of government.

La Noüe, under pretence of a religious cere-

mony which was to take place at La Rochelle, determined the inhabitants—who, wearied with long contentions, were at first undecided as to whether or not they should enter into any new scheme—to accept him once more as their guide. Under his directions their walls were repaired, their magazines replenished, and La Noüe was unanimously declared governor of their town, as well as of all the places in Poitou, Saintonge, and the Angoumois attached to the Protestant interest.

All their measures were taken with caution and judgment, and it was agreed that a body of cavalry should be ready near St. Germain, where the Court was by this time assembled, in order to carry off, as if by force, the Duke of Anjou, who should immediately be placed at the head of affairs. Everything appeared to wear a favourable aspect, when, through the indiscreet advice of La Mole, the Duke, weak and unstable, was induced to alter the arrangement, and the plan was abandoned.

Catherine had seen the necessity of amusing the minds of those about her, and knowing the weakness of her son and the fondness for dissipation of her Court, she had announced a series of fêtes to be given in honour of the King of Poland's election. The Queen of Navarre was to preside over the festivities which were to take place at St. Germain, and La Mole, whose favour with D'Anjou and his party had lately become very great, could not make up his mind to relinquish the satisfaction his vanity derived from being distinguished by the public regard of Marguerite, to which he had so long aspired. He hesitated not to sacrifice the interests of his party to his selfish gratification, and prevailed on the easy Duke to relinquish his design of joining the Huguenots till after the fêtes were over.

René, whose eager and disappointed hatred had long lain in wait for an opportunity of signal vengeance on him, had readily undertaken the Queen's commission to discover the secret workers in the suspected plot. He attached himself to La Mole with all the assiduity of which his servile nature was capable, and without much difficulty contrived to lull his suspicions, while he pretended to act in concert with Ruggieri, to forward the views of gallantry or ambition of the thoughtless and vicious cour-The certain information which he had contrived to obtain respecting the Protestant plot was the cause of Catherine's present scheme, and, as she had hoped, all fell into the snare.

The entertainments were as usual of the most splendid description, and lasted several days.

Late on the evening of the second, René and the King met in a covered walk in the gardens of the palace, and the former received his employer's directions relative to a new attempt to be made on La Mole's life. Charles, being ignorant of his mother's intentions, thought this a fitting time to execute his purpose, and René, though aware of the mode of action meditated by the Queen, was willing to make sure of his victim at once, rather than trust to the uncertain conclusion of a state trial, which, in fact, awaited the treasonable proceedings of La Mole.

"René," said the King, "this minion must not escape me again. I have employed agents who have deceived me, I have been overpowered by entreaties to show too much lenity to my foes, but I am resolved to be weak no more. La Mole shall die, if my own hands must do the deed."

"It shall not need," answered René; "Crucé the butcher, whom your Grace knows to be a sure hand, will be here anon with the cords; and he will be strangled quickly, and thought to have died from the effects of too forcible carousing." "This is well," said Charles eagerly, "I did not care to have the dagger used—I wish not to see more blood—and poison is not always sure, methinks."

René smiled as he looked on the fragile fading form of the King, and thought differently.

"Would this fellow were come," continued Charles, looking down one of the alleys—then suddenly shrinking, he added, "he is advancing—you say he does not know me?"

"No," replied Bianco, "he imagines your Grace one of our party; be not startled at his conversation; he is brutal and coarse, but one on whom we may depend."

Charles muffled himself in his mantle, and though the night was mild he shivered violently. Crucé, the hero of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, presently approached: he held in his hand a coil of rope, and walked towards them with an indifferent air.

"This is poor work," said he to René, "why employ the cord when the stab would do as well? this is against my practice, though I understand for that matter one as well as the other. Captain Florio, who has been a great traveller, has taught me a trick or two of the Indians with the cord, and I begin rather to take to it. One has only to go softly behind

one's man, and check! he's throttled at once."
As he spoke he suited his words with action, coming near the King who shrank appalled, and his cheek became paler as he faltered, addressing himself to René, in a low voice:

"Let us come this way; La Mole must pass through this passage as he returns from my mother to Anjou's apartments, where the rebels are now scheming mischief."

"If our man be an Huguenot," said Crucé,
there is little need of three of us. Leave him to me, for I have had practice among them of late. Why, in one day I killed eighty," added he, striking the King on the shoulder, who started with a guilty shudder from his touch.

René interposing, exclaimed, "Ay, master Thomas, but this is no Huguenot with whom we have to deal. May one not find enemies amongst the faithful?"

"Oh, that may be," answered his brutal associate: "for that matter, my conscience is not nice, witness for one the old canon of Notre Dame, Rouillard, who, good Catholic as he was, got not out of my house in the mêlée for an ancient grudge I owed him."

René laughed, and Charles joined in the

"Comrade," said Crucé after a long pause, in which all parties seemed to grow impatient, "have you heard of this waxen image which they say has been made of the King to be witch him? He won't live long, that's easily seen; and they say as it melts away before a slow fire he'll die by inches-the heart is pierced with pins and --"

A groan from Charles interrupted him, while Bianco quickly interposed-

"Hush!" said he, for as he held the King's arm he observed that he trembled violently; " speak not, or we frighten away our game."

While this scene was passing in one part of the gardens, the object of this secret ambush, on descending the stairs from the Queen's apartment, was met by a page, whose mysterious gestures invited him to pause.

"My Lord," said the youth, "I am commissioned to bid you seek the casement of a chamber at the south side of the palace, where you will in due time be admitted, and learn things which much concern your welfare."

"How?" said La Mole; "by what token may I know whether or not to trust you?"

"By this," said the page, putting into his hand a silver marguerite or daisy; " fail not, as you value the favour of her who wore it."

La Mole instantly recognised the flower, worn as an emblem by the young Queen of Navarre, and, giving the page a reward, hastened towards the spot which had been indicated to him, his heart swelling with pride and exultation at the honour conferred on him by the illustrious lady who thus proved her sensibility to his devotion.

He hurried along occupied with a thousand pleasing thoughts, and was soon at the opposite end of the palace to that occupied by the Duke of Anjou and himself, and thus avoiding, however unconsciously, the inhospitable reception prepared for him.

The night was now dark, and the dying illuminations served but to render the gloom deeper. He approached the window but no light was to be seen; no appearance indicated that his visit was expected. For some time he remained patiently leaning against a pillar, watching anxiously for a signal which should inform him that his vicinity was known to those within.

At length a gleam of light broke through the casement above, and he saw it descending till it shone beneath a doorway near where he was stationed. The door slowly unclosed, and a female figure cautiously looked out: he approached, and being recognised was desired to follow; he did so, and found himself conducted through a range of apartments to one where, his guide pausing, the arras was drawn back and he stood in the presence of Marguerite de Valois. The romance which he had been cherishing in his mind as he pursued his way, vanished instantly on observing the air of coldness, and almost of severity, with which the Princess received him, and he saw that two of her ladies were in attendance on her. She blushed slightly, and seemed rather confused as she addressed these words to him.

"My Lord, I have required your presence here in order to obtain information from you on a subject which involves not only your own safety, but that of others in whom I am interested. You must answer me without reserve, as I am actuated by a desire to serve you; and on your confidence in my good intentions much depends."

La Mole, alarmed by the unusual gravity of the Princess, whom he had left but a short time before all smiles and gaiety, answered by professions of sincerity, and entreaties to be honoured by her commands.

"The Duke my brother, and the King of Navarre," said she, "are suspected of treasonous

designs towards the King. What know you of their intentions?"

La Mole, assuming all the effrontery of his nature, replied, "Your Highness is deceived, and amazes me by the question:"—

He was interrupted by Marguerite—"You are Anjou's friend, and, doubtless, his confidant; it is useless, therefore, to affect ignorance of his plans. I will, however, spare your conscience the necessity of equivocation, and tell you at once that all is known, that danger will ensue;—his movements are watched; and but a few hours are left to escape the consequences of his imprudence. Ruggieri is artful, and René is your foe. A late affair, in which the latter considers himself wronged by you"—the Princess uttered these words with angry emphasis,—"has induced him to seek your destruction."

"Is it possible, madam," said La Mole, much mortified to find his adventures so well known to the Princess,—"that a mistake, a trifle like that, can occasion his anger? I assure your Highness that the female in question"—

"I require no explanation on that head,'s said Marguerite haughtily,—" all I desire to know is,—have you, in conjunction with Ruggieri, made a waxen figure with the intent » injure the health of the King?"

La Moie starteit: — "What do I hear?" cirl he. "Can your Highmen conceive so improbable an iries."

"Sursiy me instantly. La Mole," exclained the Princess passionately: "if it be true that you have practised against the life or health of my brother I remance all wish, all attempt to save you."

La Mole, struck with her impetuosity, and dreading some hidden danger for which he was unprepared; aware also of Marguerite's character for generosity, added to a hope he entertained that he was not indifferent to her, ventured to say: "If your Highness would condescend to allow me a few moments' private audience I should be able satisfactorily to explain what I am not at liberty to disclose to others."

Marguerite hesitated, but at length desired her attendants to withdraw to the adjoining closet; and La Mole, now without witnesses, spoke as follows:

"If the most presumptuous of mortals may hope for pardon from one endowed with beauty and graces unparalleled, I would disclose to your Highness a secret which I hoped to have concealed from all the world. "It is indeed true that a waxen image has been made by Ruggieri and myself, and that I have dared to utter prayers and charms before it; but it was to answer a far different purpose than that of which I am accused:—it was to melt a heart as hard as its possessor is fair, to render propitious to the vows of the truest of lovers a peerless lady, who"—

"How!" said Marguerite, colouring deeply, and in much agitation, "I knew your Lordship's heart was ever open to new impressions; but I deemed not such means necessary to secure the affections of one."

"This one, madam," said the courtier, "is superior to all the beauties that exist, and so exalted above my humble state, that nothing less than a miracle could make her cast her eyes my way."

"Name her instantly," said Marguerite trembling.

"Ah, madam!" cried La Mole, falling at her feet, and looking on her with an expression of despairing submission,—"it is La fleur des fleurs—la choix des Marquerites!"

"Is it indeed so?" exclaimed the Princess, recovering her breath, which, in an agony of offended pride and insulted dignity, she had withheld;—" and does the Queen of Navarre hear this avowal? Rise, my Lord," added she in a haughty tone, "and know that this presumption is as unwelcome as it is unlooked for."

"No, madam," said he, still prostrate at her feet, "I rise not till your lips pronounce my pardon. When Rudel lay dead at the feet of his beloved lady, did she frown, did she spurn him from her?—And am I not dead to hope, even like that unfortunate troubadour? You caused my fault, therefore you owe me pardon. Oh! pardon, gracious mistress!"

These words were spoken in accents of the deepest feeling, and with an air of profound respect, as well as hopeless sorrow. Marguerite allowed herself to be satisfied by them, and suffered him to rise with an assurance of her forgiveness; which she accorded in consideration of his not having entertained a design to injure her royal brother. She obtained from him the avowal of his connection with the Duke of Anjou's conspiracy.

"And now," said she, as she summoned her attendants, "know from me that the Princes are suspected by the Queen-mother; that she waits but the completion of the festivities to seize on their persons; and that their only chance of safety is, under some pretence, to

withdraw as early as possible from the Court, and escape whither they can. You must follow their example; but in the mean time, go not to-night to the Duke's apartments,—your life will be attempted. I know from sure authority that ruffians are stationed in the garden with an intent to assassinate you. Remain concealed here till morning; and, as soon as day is risen, hasten to the Duke with the counsel you have just received. My people will dispose you as is necessary. Farewell, therefore, and be thankful for your preservation."

At these words she withdrew, leaving La Mole overcome with surprise and consternation. He followed the attendants, who conducted him to a chamber, and, throwing himself on a couch, passed the hours in anxious doubt and uneasy foreboding.

Meanwhile the long night wore on, and the King's impatience began to exceed all bounds. The weather had changed: it was cold; and the damps of night struck him with a shivering chill, fevered as he was with excited feelings, and weak from long indisposition. At length, all thoughts of the arrival of their victim began to fade; and, as grey morning dawned, Charles, unable longer to endure the nervous agitation

he felt, quitted his confederates, and, directing them to remain till daylight, he, with faltering steps, returned to his own apartment.

The next day La Mole allowed the morning to be but little advanced before he visited the Duke of Anjou, to whom he recounted the adventure of the preceding night; and, alarning his fears of impending danger, it was immediately resolved that, under pretence of hunting, the two Princes, accompanied by La Mole, the Count de Coconnas, and several other noblemen, should, without loss of time, attempt an escape.

Their horses were got ready with as little delay as possible, and without arms, to avoid suspicion, they prepared for their expedition; when a message was suddenly delivered to them from the Queen-mother, desiring them to attend till she should join their party, as she proposed having the pleasure of hunting with them. However annoyed at this delay, they were obliged to consent with a good grace, and, in a short time, Catherine and several of her ladies were ready to set out. The cavalcade quitted the palace, and proceeded on its way; the two Princes, and those of their party, casting uneasy glances on each other as they rode along, each

revolving in his mind some means of evading the keen suspicions of the wily Catherine.

They had entered the woods, and the chase commenced. It was then that the leaders of the party determined to make a desperate effort; and, setting spurs to their horses, they darted through the avenues, and were soon lost to the sight of the Queen and her attendants.

The opposite borders of the wood were now almost gained, and they began to breathe freely, when to their astonishment and dismay they found themselves suddenly surrounded by a troop of armed men; some of whom, advancing and seizing the reins of the foremost, exclaimed, "My Lords, her Grace and her party have commanded us to conduct you back to them,—the speed of your horses has occasioned such alarm in their minds, that it is only your immediate return that can assure them of your safety. Let none attempt to continue the chase under pain of her Grace's displeasure."

Though these words were pronounced in a respectful tone, it was but too evident that they covered a deeper meaning, and the appearance of the troop showed the inutility of resistance; the Princes were therefore reluctantly compelled to turn their horses' heads and rejoin the

Queen; who, instead of returning to St. Germain, expressed her intention of proceeding immediately to Vincennes, for which place the King and all his suite had already set out.

Arrived at the castle, Catherine summoned the Duke and the King of Navarre to a private audience; and there addressing them in a severe tone, she informed them that they had not in future her permission to quit the apartments they occupied.

"How, madam," said the Duke, "are we prisoners then without having committed any crime?"

"Anjou," replied the Queen, "attempt not to deceive me, your wit is of too poor a nature. I know well all your schemes; and it is to my clemency alone that you owe the life which Charles would fain have you forfeit for betraying his interests and those of his kingdom. Reply not,—you have gone too far, and deserve to suffer; but I would not have my son, nor the husband of my daughter disgraced. Remain passive in this business, and no harm shall reach you. You will be too well guarded to escape; therefore I counsel you not to attempt it. For the traitors whom you have encouraged to rebellion, they shall pay the forfeit of their crime."

In vain did Anjou and Henry entreat her mercy for their companions. Resolved and unshaken, Catherine smiled at their vehemence, and dismissed them without affording the slightest hope to their anxious demands.

The destination of their associates was what might have been anticipated from the characters of Charles and his mother. They had determined to make signal examples of the culprits; and all on whom suspicion rested were forthwith conducted under a strong guard to the prisons of the grand châtelet. It was there that La Mole was delivered over to the governor of this place of confinement, and by him consigned to the jailor as a prisoner accused of high treason, who was to await his trial.

The accomplished and refined courtier heard himself addressed by a coarse looking man, of brutal appearance, who inquired of the governor into what dungeon he should conduct the prisoner. He was desired to consult the party concerned; and turned his inquiries on La Mole.

"I have accommodation," said he, "for all ranks: tell me, therefore, on which list you choose to be placed."

"Conduct me where you will," said the unfortunate courtier, "I am perfectly indifferent."

"Then you are a fool for your pains," growled the jailor: for when there is good choice one may be nice—qui a des noix il en casse, qui n'en a il s'en passe. Now, mark me; in this our palace there are, besides many not worth boasting of, ten chambers, as comfortable as any I would wish to place a Christian gentleman in: if indeed you are a Jew or a Huguenot, I can't promise you much; but for a person of condition, look you, there is first, La Salle," he continued to enumerate them, counting on his fingers - "La Motte, Les Chaines, Beauvoir, Les Boucheries, Beaumont, La Grièche, Beauvais, Barbarie, and Gloriette. For six deniers a-night you have a good bed and all your heart can desire - paying every day for the trouble I take in attending to you the sum of -"

"Silence," said La Mole impatiently, "take me to the best of your horrible abodes, and cease this impertinent clamour: there will be no demur about your gains."

"Truly, my dainty minion," muttered the man, as he sullenly led the way, "you may thank me for not taking you to the Fin d'Aise, or the Chausse d'Hypocras, where we let down the prisoners through a hole, like a bucket into a well; methinks 'tis a place good enough."

Once arrived in the miserable receptacle

allotted to him, La Mole abandoned himself to all the horrors of despair. He well knew the implacable character of Catherine, and the certainty of being sacrificed to her fondness for the King of Poland, against whose interest the plot in which he had been engaged was directed; he knew also the hatred borne him by Charles, and was aware of the numerous failures the latter had experienced in his attempts to rid himself of a detested object; and he saw clearly that his doom was sealed, while in the bitterness of his heart he cursed the authors of the plot, and himself for having consented to enter into it. Remorse for the cruelties he had committed. which had never before found entrance into his mind, now asserted its sway, and all the blackness of his crimes cast their huge shadows around him; - his ears rung with the cries of his dying victims, - mangled and ghastly forms seemed to flit before his eyes, and he cast himself on the floor of his dungeon, uttering loud and frantic shrieks.

The trial of this vain and unfortunate man followed soon after. Great stress was laid on the discovery of the waxen image; and, as his fate was determined beforehand, he was at once condemned. The courage which had forsaken him in his prison returned not at the final manne: were signed him of all pover to any to seem special allient to him; and is any worse were a stronge mailing of the devtor to the more measurement to practice, and to policy where high had remined metall to the

"May me Subar and the bilanced Virgin," to exceeding, "three many as my soul."—conmont me to the Junea of Noveme and to the arise."

Tours remaining and remains of more acproposant has to be constitute and after his made, it we discovered that he was a shirt of for lawy of Charres, which had always formed mer at his steer, as it was his hope that by me-mone he should shows the Divine blanking, it has more at all the saw which he was in the tack made at manufacture.

A Mose sufficient that the particularities of transum interest in mater of his companion, the incomes into making Commen, followed interests where the interest of both these materials after making of many persons or whom no suspector has follow. Among others, being over entered of his over each was continued in his over each was continued in his particular flagging. He contribute this, incover, or exaltily and se-

cretly, that the Queen-mother was ignorant of the fact of his being accused; and the victim himself, though he could not but entertain suspicion of the real author of his misfortune, could obtain no certainty, and was staggered in his opinion by the apparent frankness and friendly manner of his enemy, who visited him in prison, and offered him all the alleviation possible for him to bestow.

The judgment of the Courts condemned him to the galleys, after having publicly undergone the punishment of the pillory.

The day was fixed for the infliction of this ignominious sentence; and René exulted in the success of his schemes of vengeance.

The state of the King's health prevented his removal from Vincennes; but the Queen-mother, on the very day in question, made a journey into Paris, being anxious not to leave that city too long without her presence in these times of rebellion and confusion. She had made some progress through the streets, when suddenly the cries and exclamations of the people became so loud and violent as to alarm her. In spite of all the address of René, who trembled lest she should discover the truth, and who had in vain endeavoured to prevent her ill-timed visit, Catherine insisted on the cavalcade stopping,

and the cause of the tumult being ascertained. An officer rode up and informed her that it was in consequence of a criminal being dragged to punishment for having been concerned in the late rebellion, and having formed a figure of virgin wax, with an intent to take away the King's life.

"How!" exclaimed Catherine, turning pale; "what wretch has dared to do so? what subject could be so vile?"

The officer hesitated, knowing the rank Ruggieri had held in her favour, and, conceiving that he suffered with her knowledge, dreading to offend by reminding her of his unworthiness.

The Queen turned on him an angry glance. "Must I ask twice?" cried she;—"who is this wretch?"

"May it please your Grace," answered the officer, "it is Cosmo Ruggieri the Florentine."

The eyes of the Queen-mother flashed fire; she turned her stern and angry countenance towards René, who attended by her carriage door.

"False slave!" said she, "did you not tell me Cosmo was absent visiting a sick relation? You knew of his danger, and apprised me not of it. Go instantly and command his release in my name,—go!" she repeated vehemently,—"you, René, you shall be the instrument of saving him whom you would have injured."

Her impatient signal was obeyed by Bianco; who finding that matters had taken a turn so unfavourable to his wishes, conceived it advisable to submit with a good grace: without, therefore, attempting to utter a word of excuse he hurried forward to the place of execution.

There existed in Paris several pillories: that at which Cosmo was to be exposed was in the Halles, not far from an ancient fountain. Its form was octagon, lantern-shaped, and open on all sides; and, like most of the buildings at that period, presented in its architecture a degree of elegance scarcely suited to its purpose. The open sides were finished by pointed arches; and the crockets which adorned it were gracefully fashioned. This upper part of the building was of wood; and its high, pointed roof was surmounted by a vane. The immense lantern turned on a pivot, being fixed on a tower of solid masonry; beside which sheds were erected. The culprit, whose head and hands were placed in the receptacles for them, was occasionally whirled round in his elevated position, in order that the mob might have a better view of him.

In this plight stood Cosmo Ruggieri, the favourite of the Queen, when René, pressing through the crowd, called aloud to the magistrates to suspend the execution of his punishment in her Majesty's name.

Much to the disappointment of the mob, who uttered unqualified expressions of their contempt and hatred of the Italian favourites as a body, and their royal mistress herself, whose popularity was decreasing every day, the order which René brought was obeyed, and the astrologer released from his degrading station and carried into a chamber beneath. Here René endeavoured to persuade him that he had been the cause of his release, and had induced Catherine to come to Paris with no other view than by her presence to deliver him from the dangerous position in which he had only just discovered him to be.

"My good friend," said René, "I rely on you to set the matter right with the Queen, who most unjustly supposes that I have not exerted myself to serve you. You know with what zeal I have attempted your rescue, and how often I have visited you in your calamity.

"It is true," said Cosmo, grateful for his release, and confused with the rapidity of events, "and I will take care to represent it to Catherine." René, with exultation in his eye, conducted the rescued prisoner to the Queen's carriage, attended by guards, who kept him from the violence of the shouting mob. Catherine ordered Ruggieri to be placed in a litter belonging to some of her suite, and condescended to listen to the exculpation which Bianco with much eloquence attempted.

She appeared to be satisfied with his account, but saw clearly enough the real state of the case, and inwardly resolved to take an opportunity of mortifying him while she gratified his rival. However, harmony seemed to be restored, and the whole party returned to Vincennes, more or less satisfied with the adventure of the day.

CHAPTER III.

A DEATH-BED.

Il n'est Roy, Empereur, Duc, Conte, Qui ne soit sujet à la mort, Et qui ne faille rendre conte, De ce qu'il a fait droit ou tort.

Martial de Paris.

When Charles the Ninth entered the Chateau of Vincennes he was so much excited with feelings of gratified hate, finding as he did all his enemies in his power, that he boasted of his health being quite re-established, and talked of a thousand schemes for the future. His attached nurse, however, was of a different opinion, and saw with grief that he was daily wasting away: his flashes of spirit and animation were succeeded by fits of deep despondency; his dreams were feverish, and his waking fearful.

One day he would insist on hunting, and would exert his strength and energies to the

utmost; the next he would be quite subdued, and unable to attend to business of any description. He loved the society of his sister Marguerite, but the name of his brother Henry seemed to give him a pang of agony. He trembled when his mother approached him, and avoided her as much as possible. At first, when his sister ventured to entreat his clemency for the two princes detained as prisoners in the Château, he became so irritated that she feared to renew the subject. She wearied herself in devising schemes for their release, and as she was permitted to go and come at all times, and visit the captives without question, in consequence of the information she had before given of their intended evasion, she resolved to make an attempt to rescue them.

She was sometimes accompanied by one of her ladies, when she visited the royal prisoners, and the guard did not attempt to examine them nor make them take off their masks. La Torigni and she, therefore, thought it possible so to disguise one of the Princes, as that he might return with her dressed as a female.

When they entered the chamber in which they were confined together, she could not help being amused at their occupation: they had several quails which they were flying from one end of the long corridor which led from their room to the other, and betting with great earnestness as to which would reach the extremity first.

- "Alas!" said Marguerite, unable to repress a smile, "this is sorry amusement for two Princes like you, who should be chasing the stag in yonder forest."
- "True, Marguerite," replied Anjou, "but we are obliged to be content with smaller game, you see, and I assure you it is very entertaining."

Henry sighed, and gazed mournfully from the window.

- "I have a plan," said Marguerite, "which if you instantly adopt you may be soon in a condition to resume your old sports. Let one of you dress yourself in the mantle, robe, and mask of La Torigni, and come with me back to my coach; no one will question us, and you may thus be able to escape."
- "How, Marguerite," said Henry, "would you expose yourself to such a risk for our sake?
 —it must not be."

He took her hand kindly—she trembled, and the tears started to her eyes.

"It must," she replied, "there is no danger for me — Charles will readily forgive my part in this; and for my mother, as I never have her grace, I can be no worse off. Lose no time, I entreat you—I name neither, but I implore that one of you prepare to follow me."

La Torigni had, in the meantime, taken off her veil, mantle, and mask.

"Go, Anjou," exclaimed Henry, "let it be you to tempt this venture."

"What, and leave you to meet the fate, perhaps, of La Mole and the rest," cried Anjou; "no, Henry, your life is of more consequence to the party than my own. Fly to La Rochelle—they are already prepared—myriads will flock to your standard, and I will find some other means of escape."

"There is no other, my dear friend," said Henry; "dear Marguerite's plan is the best, but delay may ruin us. Hasten you to England to your royal bride elect—she will assist you with men and money. I will trust again to my wife for assistance, and we shall, perhaps, soon meet again."

"If it must be," returned Anjou, "give me your robe my pretty Torigni, and let me try how I shall play the demoiselle."

Laughing, in spite of their fears, the party prepared to array the Duke in his disguise. Henry's kind and grateful tone towards her, made the heart of Marguerite bound with hope and delight. "He will love me after all," she said to herself, " and happy years may yet be in store for me."

Anjou was nearly equipped, and La Torigni was coquettishly teaching him how to bear himself, and receiving his instructions in return how to wear his cloak and shade her eyes with his bonnet and feather, when a step was heard in the outer chamber, the door was thrown open, and the Queen-mother and Madame de Sauves stood before them.

"You are merry maskers," said the Queenmother in a contemptuous tone, " but we heard of your pastime and were anxious to join it. Will you suffer us to be of the party?"

Marguerite summoned all her presence of mind, and endeavoured to turn the whole business into a joke, which the Princes favoured as much as their vexation would allow. However annoyed the young Queen might be at the failure of her project, her distress was heightened by observing the effect produced upon her husband by the entrance of De Sauves. Henry turned red and pale by turns, and retiring with her into a recess of the window, commenced an animated conversation in an under tone, while

the Queen-mother kept the Duke and herself employed in listening to her.

"Well, Marguerite," said she; "I admire your new carriage extremely. You have no idea, Anjou, how gay it is; the panels are covered with gold, and the enameled flower border is exquisite round the portières. It is lined with yellow velvet, embroidered in silver in the most graceful Grecian pattern. But I desired it to be driven away, as I thought we would go together to the forest to see the hunting."

"As your Grace desires," said Marguerite, colouring; for she saw through the Queen's meaning.

"De Sauves will kindly amuse the Princes," she said, "till my return; and, Torigni, you can await us here—be as witty and gay as possible, that they may not regret our absence or the interruption of the masque."

So saying, they separated according to Catherine's arrangement, who did not deign to notice to her daughter the discovery she had made of the plan for the escape of one of her prisoners. Marguerite exerted herself to appear in her usual spirits; and, as there were several ladies in the Queen's coach, her confusion was, she

hoped, unobserved by her mother. After a miserable drive through the forest she returned; and, being joined by La Torigni, hid herself in her own apartments dispirited and wretched.

Meantime the conversation which had taken place between Henry and the artful object of his admiration was far from conducing to the interests of Marguerite. De Sauves, who had by her spies obtained information of the part the Princess had taken from policy in preventing their former escape, represented her conduct in the worst light, and made it appear that her present friendly offer was a scheme to draw them into some imprudence, and make a merit with the King of betraying them, as she had done before.

Henry, though his amiable nature made it difficult to him to believe so much treachery existed in one whose good qualities he could not but have observed, was yet biased by the arguments, and seduced by the affectionate interest shown by De Sauves; and resolved in future to be more guarded than ever, and to avoid all familiar intercourse with the unfortunate wife, who, he felt, was forced upon him in the first instance by a stratagem, the effects of which he could never reflect on without horror.

De Sauves continued to visit the Princes in their confinement, bringing with her several ladies recommended as suitable for their mutual purpose by the Queen-mother; keeping up lively and amusing scenes, which should distract the melancholy thoughts of the captives, and make them forget their plans for the good of their party. She succeeded so well, that both Princes believed themselves chosen as her favourite, and by degrees jealous feelings crept between them and their former friendship; and, when alone, they seldom spoke together of their private affairs.

Marguerite, a few days after her futile attempt to release the Princes, was sitting in her chamber, full of mournful thoughts, when Mabille, the King's nurse, sent word to be allowed to enter. She came with tears in her eyes to tell the Princess that King Charles, who had passed a very bad night, desired her presence.

"He wishes, madam, to see you alone," said Mabille; "for he loves you much, and confides in you entirely, and would not have others by at your conference."

Marguerite started up, and, with agitated steps, followed the nurse by a private way to the chamber of the King. He had not risen; and she was shocked to observe the hollowness of his eyes, and the livid paleness of his cheeks. A ray of pleasure lighted up his countenance as she approached.

" Margot," he said, " I sent for you that I may speak confidentially to one who, alone of all my family, I know to be true. I have done you much wrong, but not altogether personally, for I have always loved you. Your husband is a good man,-I know not how one with so good a heart could exist amongst us, for we are all bad; -even you cannot be perfect, Margot, for you are my mother's daughter. Do not confide too much in either of our brothers. Anjou is weak and wavering: Henry,-he who is King of Poland, and waits impatiently to be King of France,-he is wicked, and will seek your ruin: tell Henry of Navarre to beware of him. I would fain," he added, his mind apparently wandering, "they escaped; my mother told me you tried to effect it-I would you had. They will not be safe here; I have been made to write letters in favour of Henry-lies-lies -even to the last, and now Margot I am dying. She will soon come-kiss me-she will be a spy on me to the end. I hear her step. Retire: if she knows I sent for you she will suspect something. I am resolved to see Navarre; send, and let him insist on being admitted."

He pushed her from him hastily after having clasped her in his arms, and mingled his tears with hers, for he heard that the Queen-mother approached. Marguerite returned as quickly as possible to her own apartments, and hurried from thence to those of her husband. She informed him of the request of Charles; and he. seeing her tears, endeavoured to comfort her, speaking, as was usual with him when uninfluenced by others, kindly and with tenderness. But the sound of his voice when he thus addressed her, while it revived all her fond devotion towards him, served but to render her aftermoments more unhappy when she reflected that it was merely the kindness of his nature which inspired its tone, and not any love for her whom he addressed.

Henry detained her for a moment as she was about to leave him.

"Marguerite," said he, "I fear I have not sufficiently expressed my gratitude to you for the able defence with which you furnished me in this late sad trial where so many of my friends have perished. I have gained no little credit for my eloquence, which my judges knew not was borrowed; and but for your kind foresight I must have said something to criminate my companions."

"All my talents, such as they are," returned Marguerite, "I am too happy to dedicate to you; to serve you is my only wish—alas! would I were more successful! But Charles is in a mood to grant you much—he is, I fear, dying—if I lose him I have no support!"

Her tears flowed afresh. Henry overcome by her sorrow leant over her chair, and stooping down kissed her forehead. "Poor Marguerite!"—he said, in so tender a tone that her heart seemed to die away with emotion; she dared not look up,—she stirred not, but remained for some time without speech or motion. When at length she roused herself she found that Henry was gone, and she was alone in his chamber. She approached the table at which he had been sitting, took up one of the gloves he had worn and kissed it, lifted up the book he had been reading, and found this passage marked in the verses of Desportes:—

"L'honneur tant désiré n'est qu' une vision Qui, troublant nos esprits par leur illusion, Fait quitter l'heur présent pour follement chercher Une ombre qu'on ne peut voir, sentir, ni toucher."

She replaced the book with a sigh. "Honour nevertheless will be no empty vision to him," said she; "he is full of noble qualities, and worthy of a better fate than to be caged here amongst enemies. Why does he not love me? He acknowledges my advice is useful to him,—he seeks my counsel, yet he flies my society,—he mistrusts and confides in me at the same time,—why is this?"

She was answered by her next glance towards the table, for there lay a small picture painted by du Moutier, one of the court painters, representing in all her fatal beauty and fascination the too successful De Sauves. "He pities me!" she exclaimed bitterly, and quitting the room hurried back to her own apartment.

Meantime Henry had applied to be admitted to the sick chamber of the King, but the guard requested him to retire as the Queen-mother had given orders that he should not be disturbed, having just received the visit of the Bishop of Auxerre and the priest.

"Refuse me not," said Henry; "the King himself desires my presence, and I insist on entering."

He advanced, and knocked himself at the door, notwithstanding the opposition of the soldier.

The sick King, who was listening for his arrival, raised himself in his bed, and exclaimed—

- Manuala.— It is the King of Neverre; open
- merenpooniy. "His Grace can ill bear clamour and atterrupture."
- "Manus." and Charles, looking fiercely at her. "I will be a sing now, if you would never before permet me to be so. I say, Henry of Neverte, my intoline-in-law, shall enter. What miles have I was discus gainery my will?"

Customers was silent, but turned pale with rage as Mainile operate the door and Henry enment. He was struck with the scene before inn. The Queen-mother was seated at the ben's beni, on a confer such as was the usual jurniture of private rooms at that period. At a little distance was Anjou, and further off still at the four of the best, in an attitude of humility, and partially concealed by the heavy curtains, stooi Elizabeth of Austria, her hands clasped in prayer, and with deep grief on her countenance. Mabille supported the King in her arms: his ince was ghastly, his night-dress spotted with blood, owing to the rupture of a bloodvessel which had taken place in the night; the same stains were on the bed-clothes; and as he sat erect, with his sunken eves glaring between passion and pain, his teeth clenched,

and his hollow cheeks of deadly whiteness, while his emaciated hands felt wanderingly about for some support, his appearance was horrible in the extreme.

He seemed to revive for a moment as Henry approached, but it was with difficulty he spoke as he grasped his hand convulsively.

"Forgive me, Henry," he said; "I fear I have followed evil counsels."

"With all my heart I forgive your Grace," said Henry; "can I in aught be serviceable to your wishes, command me I entreat."

Charles endeavoured to smile, pressed his hand, and tried to raise his finger to point towards his wife.

"I confide to you—to you, Henry, my wife and infant daughter. I recommend them to your care. God will bless and keep you. But," he added, struggling for breath, "do not trust in——"

"Hold! sire," interposed Catherine; "say

"I ought to say it," said Charles, sinking back, "for it is the truth."*

Catherine held to his nostrils an essence which she carried—he appeared to grow fainter

[.] This scene is historical.

—she desired that the Princes and the reigning Queen should leave the apartment, as he seemed inclined to sleep,—then rising, left him to the care of Mabille, and retired with the rest.

Many hours passed on into the night, and Mahille stirred not from his pillow; one pale hand lay on his breast, the other had fallen by his side; his head was buried in the cushion which supported it: he breathed hard, but moved not, till just as the heavy solemn sound of the bell of the Sainte Chapelle struck two he opened his eyes, glared wildly round, and uttered a shriek, so loud, so appalling, that the sentinels without started, and Mabille shuddered with horror. He raised himself up in his bed, and threw his arms frantically from side to side.

"Save me!" he cried in a piercing voice;
the spectres are bloody!—they nod at me!
they snatch at my heart!—they are there
waiting to torment me!—the bell has sounded,—kill—kill!"

With a violent effort he tried to leap from the couch; a stream of blood rushed from his lips and covered him with its tide, when falling suddenly backward on his pillow he expired.

At the same moment the chamber-door opened, and gave entrance to the Queen-mother, the Cardinals of Bourbon and Ferrara, the Chancellor Birague, and other grandees of the Court who were in attendance in the ante-chamber. All surrounded his bed, and Mabille, who had fainted, was carried to her apartment by some of the attendants.

CHAPTER IV.

SIEGE OF DOMPRONT.

Oh! what a noble combat last thou fought!

King John.

THE Rochellois, while they kept themselves on the alert, maintained, nevertheless, an appearance of peace: they resolutely refused to admit any of the opposite party into their town as persons in authority; but as yet no outbreak of hostilities had obliged them to act more than on the defensive. The breaches in their ramparts were repaired, their soldiers well disciplined, and they felt themselves strong in friends and money. The Count de Montgomery's supplies had reached them at a lucky moment, and his arrival at Jersey was heard of by them with great pleasure. As soon as he landed his forces - but before he himself proceeded to the towns in Normandy which called upon him for assistance - he resolved to visit La Rochelle, and arrived there just at the time when the marriages of Belcastel and Claude were about to be solemnised. When the gallant conduct of these young volunteers was named to him, and when he recognised in them his former friends of Paris, he was extremely gratified, and desired to be present at the solemnity. It was from his hand that Claude received his beloved Alix; and the Count, who was much affected during the ceremony, presented her with a ring of great value.

"I give you," he said, "this ring, because it is one of those jewels which I prize the most in the world. Claude I look upon as the preserver of my life, and I would fain feel that she whom he loves so well should possess something which shall be a tie in sympathy between us. This ring was given to me by my adored wife, whom I lost when the world and all its cares were new to me. That period was the beginning of the sorrows with which it has pleased Heaven to visit me. When you look on it, fair Alix, remember one who will always think on you both with a parent's affection. Would I could remain and witness your happiness! but my fate calls me away. I am summoned this very day, and my horse is at the church door to carry me to scenes of war and tumult once again."

He embraced the bride and bridegroom with friendly emotion, and took his leave. Not long after his departure from La Rochelle, Alix was regarding her ring with attention, and pointed out to Claude the peculiarity of its device, which was an altar, with the words "ARDO Y ADORO," and the letters "G. A." intertwined.

"This is strange!" said Claude, starting;—
"the same motto and device are on the chain which I treasure as my only possession; and, what is more singular, it was through René Bianco, our foe, that I discovered the secret spring which conceals it. Look, Alix," said he, putting the chain into her hands,—"perhaps your ingenuity can find the secret; in vain have I attempted it; yet René, as with an accustomed hand, opened it in an instant,"

They both examined the clasp with great care, but could not discover the method of unclosing it.

"Would that we were near dear Mabille!" said Alix.—"I have seen similar chains in her possession: her husband was a skilful jeweller, and, she has often told me, was noted for his workmanship. She would probably be able to assist us. Mathurin is unfortunately

gone to Alençon, or his knowledge might have

"There is a mysterious feeling," said Claude, musing,—" which comes over my mind whenever I am brought into contact with the Count de Montgomery.—It has always seemed to me, when I have thought of him, as if there was some link which drew us together. Alas! I am unknown, even to myself;—an orphan, and a stranger to all who protected me. Why may I not, by some strange destiny, have been near him in infancy, and retain some recollection which time has not altogether effaced? It is, of course, only a curious coincidence about this device, yet it disturbs me strangely."

Little more was said on the subject at the time, but neither Alix nor Claude could banish it from their memory; and their speculations frequently recurred.

Meantime, the fate of the gallant Montgomery was drawing to a close. From town to town, along the line of country from Valogne to St. Lo, he had led his troops, joined by the flower of the Protestant party, and gained more or less success, till he entered the beautiful and difficult country of the Vaux, and paused at the little town of Domfront, in the château of which he hoped to be able to defend himself; but

treachery had been at work amongst his army: the Queen-mother had made an oath in her own mind that, once again in France, Montgomery should be her victim. Neither troops nor money were spared; and a mighty army, under the direction of Marshal de Matignon, and many other experienced officers, was despatched to attack him. His Protestant friends at a distance saw his danger, and trembled for his safety: even in the ranks of the enemy were numerous concealed friends, employed by Henry of Navarre, to warn him to escape, assuring him that he was alone the object of pursuit.

He was urged to quit the town of Domfront, and every facility could have been afforded for his escape; but he rejected all offers, with surprise at their being made, resolving to fight to the last with those who remained faithful to him. Day after day, however, he grieved to find that his men deserted, and that bribery was effecting what force had failed to do. Hemmed in on all sides, he found his party was, at length, reduced to a few wounded, and not more than a hundred capable, men. The town, although situated on an eminence, was commanded by other heights, where the enemy was now stationed, and could direct a fatal and unerring fire into the town, which was very ruinous, as were the walls of the antique castle itself; but the last was the only hope which he retained,—trusting that, with a few determined followers, he should be able to defend it till assistance might arrive.

The cannon had battered the crumbling walls from sunrise till sunset of the preceding day,—immense breaches were effected in the town walls, and one enormous tower had given way. It was then that Montgomery resolved to retire into the castle with all who would follow him. Forty alone volunteered to support him, and amongst these were, unfortunately, some paid friends of Catherine. The assault upon the town was furious, and every hour the assailants poured in at the breaches. Montgomery and his small party, before they began their defence, knelt down and listened to the service performed by a minister of the Gospel.

The assailants were in number more than a thousand; nevertheless, for five hours the Count made good his defence on the first day, fighting at the breach with the most determined valour, while the ponderous masonry of his battered tower fell in heavy masses round him. Twice he was wounded in the face by fragments of the flying stones, a ball from an arquebuse struck him on the shoulder, but his

armour was proof against it, though the bruise it caused was serious and painful.

With perseverance almost incredible, and with good fortune which promised a better result, he continued to sustain the unceasing assault for several days. The enemy's cannon, however, effected its purpose, and a second wide breach was made in the immense walls; still the brave few laboured to fill up the chasms, and kept them back; but on the morning of the twenty-sixth of May Montgomery discovered that his treacherous friends had deserted him, by degrees, till he and fifteen others alone remained to contend with the hundreds without.

It was then that, overpowered by the entreaties of these few, seeing all chance gone,—their ammunition at an end and water failing them—dispirited at the base desertion of those in whom he trusted—Montgomery consented to a parley.

The most honourable terms were granted him; he was to be permitted to march out fully accourted, but with no arms save sword and dagger, and declare himself their prisoner, so to be considered for a certain time, till his ransom was agreed on; but the most solemn assurances were given that his life should be in no danger.

His companions were also proclaimed free to march forth similarly accounted, and to render themselves on the same terms.

Accordingly, Montgomery gave up himself and his men into the hands of De Matignon and De Vassay, who was a relation of the Count: and the victors entered the château by the breaches.

But scarcely had they entered, than the shrieks and cries within told how ill the compact had been kept: except a few whom they kept prisoners, for the sake of appearances, all the rest, sick and wounded, were put to the sword. One captain, who had shown great valour in the defence, they hung from the walls; and the excellent minister, whose prayers and exhortations had comforted and encouraged the unfortunate soldiers, the servants of Catherine butchered where they found him, on his knees in prayer.

It was, therefore, with little hope of safety that Montgomery took his way to Caen, under the escort of commanders who had so ill kept faith to his brave followers; and his feelings, as he entered the city so fatal to him, were those of horror and despondency. When he heard that Charles IX. had just breathed his last, and that Catherine de Medicis had caused herself to be proclaimed Regent of the kingdom, in the absence of Henry, King of Poland, he knew that his last chance of liberty or life had departed for ever.

CHAPTER V.

THE TALISMAN.

What! will the line stretch till the crack of doom?

Macbeth.

THE night after the death of King Charles, Catherine and Bianco conferred together in the Queen's tower in Paris.

"And now, Madonna," said René Bianco, "you are sole Sovereign of France. There is none to control you,— your will is law,— and Montgomery was this morning brought prisoner from Caen to Paris."

"Oh, Bianco!" answered the Queen, "you are right; for the first time in my existence I feel that I am now free to act. I have despatched courier after courier to inform Henry of his brother's death,—that if one fails, another may reach him,—yet months must elapse before he can escape from the desolate region where a brother's hatred banished him. Mean-

time, Navarre is in my power, the charms of De Sauves still enchain him, and he will not strive to escape; jealousy has sprung between him and Anjou, — and thus their plans will fail. The Bastile holds the other dangerous rebels. But, above all, De Lorges is mine. The walls of the Conciergerie have received him, and he leaves them only for the scaffold. Now, René, my star is indeed in the ascendant."

"And this very night," said René, "the talisman is complete."

"Is it, indeed, possible?" exclaimed Catherine. "Oh, give it me, René,—let me feast my eyes on the precious treasure!"

Bianco approached the light which burned upon the table, and, drawing from his bosom a small box, gave it into her hands. She opened it with trembling haste, and beheld a medal covered with characters, which, with the deepest interest, she proceeded to examine.

It was of oval shape. On the side which presented itself to her view was represented a naked figure seated, with long hair and beard, wearing a crown, and holding a sceptre in his right hand. The head and body of an eagle appeared between his knees, as if he were resting upon it. Before him stood a figure like the Egyptian

Anubis, naked, with a dog's head, holding a large mirror towards the crowned figure, and supporting himself on a long spear with a barbed head. Round about were various hieroglyphical emblems, resembling architectural forms, and many mysterious signs environed both figures.

Between the two was written the word ANAEL, with a triangular sign, and the letter H beneath it. Below the line, on which the figures were placed, were the letters H. F., crowned with hieroglyphical signs, and the words AMIC and OXIF.

Catherine gazed long and fixedly on this, while René, in mysterious language, explained the meaning; he then took the medal from its case, and turned it on the other side.

At the top appeared the sign of the planet Venus, and beneath it the word HAGIEL over the head of a naked female figure, who, with arms outstretched, held some objects which resembled masonic instruments. Signs and hieroglyphics were profusely scattered over the surface. Between a double cross and mysterious letter were the five small circles or balls, representing the arms of the house of Medici. Beside the left knee of the figure was the word HANIEL; and below her feet EBVLEB:

beneath which appeared ASMODEL, with the sign of the balance.

- "While you wear this," said René solemnly, "you will reign supreme. While Charles lived there was still something wanting; but now I know of no impediment. For nights have I watched with patient toil to complete this work. Therein is human blood, the blood of goats, and every metallic poison which the mines of earth contain,— all has been mixed beneath the influence of those constellations which had power at the period of your birth. It is a great mystery, and must be a profound secret to every living creature."
- "It shall," said the awestruck Queen, receiving it from him, and hanging it round her neck by a silver chain to which it was attached.
- "Observe!" said René, "you will reign supreme; I say not for how long, nor do I guarantee that crosses will not come to thwart you, the influences of other stars may fight against you; and, though you will surmount them, they will cause you trouble."
- "But I shall surmount them?" asked the Queen eagerly.
- "You will," replied the Italian. "But for one human affection that clings about your

heart, you were sole arbitress of your own fate. You cannot but guess what I mean."

"I know not, René," said Catherine; "explain what weakness stands in my way."

"You have still two sons," replied René; then, lowering his voice, he added, "you must have none before the great work can be accomplished."

Catherine shuddered. "We will talk," she said, "of this hereafter. Would that I knew if Anjou would wed the Queen of England! Would that I knew the fate of Henry of Navarre! Cannot we consult the mirror tonight? Are not the stars propitious to our questions?"

"They are, madonna," replied René. "If you will, this hour shall present the secrets of futurity before you."

"Be it so!" said Catherine.

The work of incantation, which was so often carried on in that mysterious chamber, was again resumed. A gloomy shadow crept by degrees along the floor, and rose in strange forms to the roof; the light became extinct; and a lurid ray spread itself over the surface of the mirror opposite the Queen.

A phantom shape * suddenly appeared in the glass, — it was crowned, and wore the features of the King of Poland. Fifteen times the shape returned to the delighted eyes of Catherine. The last time something dimly apparent flashed across it, which shone in her eyes like the glitter of steel; but she could not define its exact meaning.

Another figure then rose, but it appeared older than a son of Henry's might seem; and, as she strained her eyes to catch the lineaments, she recognized those of the Duke de Guise; but scarcely was she aware of it, when it had disappeared, and a clash of arms accompanied its sudden exit from the scene.

Next advanced a form which, with feelings of rage and hatred, she perceived bore the traits of Henry of Navarre: she could scarcely restrain an exclamation of impatience; but René hastily caught her arm, and signed to her to be silent.

Twenty-two circuits the figure made, and then faded with a flash similar to that which had been seen at her son Henry's departure;—a long line of crowned forms, with the arms of Bourbon gleaming above them, ran rapidly

* The whole of these particulars are historical, related by the chroniclers of the time.

along the glass; but Catherine closed her eyes,

A female figure throned, with ships and cannon, and hosts of shadowy guards, and piles of
gold, was then seen. At first, the features were
those of Elizabeth of England, in her youth;
but, as she still remained seated a change appeared, wrinkles marked her brow, and fresh
navies and new armies seemed passing and repassing around, before, and behind her. A scaffold grew distinct, and a female form was led
to it; but Catherine could scarcely credit her
sight, which told her the victim wore the crown
of France, and had the mien of Mary of Scotland.

This faded, and the queenly phantom grew older and more aged in her sight, till she had reached decrepitude: but ever her state, and wealth, and power seemed to increase, till the mirror was crowded with indistinct moving shadows. No partner shared her throne; and the sign of Virgo hovered to the last above her head. At length she disappeared, and all was darkness.

Catherine cast herself into a seat; and René proceeded to destroy the charm by sundry cabalistic formulæ: the cloud dispersed, and the chamber resumed its former appearance, while the lights sprang forth again and illumined the whole space.

- " Now, Bianco," said the Queen, " ask me for what you will, that I may show my gratitude by granting it."
- "First, madonna, I must have gold," replied René, "and a large sum: but I have set my mind on something which you will consider rather strange, perhaps, for one like me;—the Abbey of St. Mahé, in Brittany, is a rich one, and may be purchased: you must give that to me, and see how good an abbot I shall become. Not that I mean to abandon you or the Court, madonna," added he, smilingly; "it is but for the sake of the revenue; and also," he continued, crossing himself, "to do service to mother church."
- "Bianco," said Catherine, with a perturbed countenance, "you have asked that which is no longer in my power to give. I have already rewarded a faithful servant with that Abbey—you must think of some other."

The brow of René lowered, and one of those malignant glances shot from his eyes which were familiar to their expression, but he said nothing.

"Is not that of Bourgueil in Anjou vacant?" asked the Queen.

"Bailly, the President of Accounts, bought it but lately," replied René, with a sneer; "has your Grace forgotten it?"

"Oh, true!" answered his mistress; "the father of your runaway bride. Why René do you not visit him, and induce him to make you his heir? The President is rich; and since you would fain have church possessions, why not those? There has been some cavilling of late about these appointments to laymen, and I care not to give the severe preachers and the Huguenots a handle for abuse. But think not you shall go ungratified: the country-house and estate of La Mole shall be yours; it is forfeited for his treason, and there is no reason why a dear friend of mine, whose taste is equal to the former possessor's, should not enjoy it."

Bianco expressed his thanks, and was, to a certain degree, gratified by the donation; but the first refusal rankled in his heart, and he resolved to discover to whom the coveted Abbey had been granted.

The truth was that, as a compensation for all the terror he had lately suffered, and as an inducement to him to relinquish the vengeance he had sworn against René, Catherine had presented that valuable possession to no other than Cosmo Ruggieri, his rival, who, in return had but just furnished her with a painted talisman of virgin parchment, formed, as was said, of the skin of an infant that had died in its birth, which was considered a potent charm against poison and the evil eye; the influence of both of which, in spite of her apparent confidence, she dreaded might one day be extended against her by her useful but dangerous friend, René Bianco.

She had despatched Cosmo to take possession of his Abbey, thinking it better that the rivals should not be together at this moment. She was anxious that René should absent himself shortly, as the other was expected back, and was glad of the thought which had suggested itself of his visiting Bailly—a hint he was not slow to take, as he built on it some plans which time matured in due course.

Catherine lost no time in taking every precaution to insure the establishment of her power, and to guard against any attempt which might touch her interest or safety. She caused all the doors and entries of the Louvre to be walled up, leaving no other open than the great door which looked towards the Hotel de Bourbon. Of this even the wicket was alone unclosed; behind it was stationed a guard of archers, and without a Swiss corps de garde. The two extremities of the Rue du Louvre were also walled up, leaving a small entry in each strongly guarded, so that no one could approach the château without permission.

She had previously been waited upon at Vincennes by all the dignitaries of Paris, the members of the Court of Parliament, the Prévôt des Marchands and Echevins, and the chief councillors and leading citizens, to intreat her to fulfil the expressed desire of the late King, and accept the regency of the kingdom during the absence of her son the King of Poland.

She had, without the loss of a moment's time, despatched letters to all the governors of every province in France, to the following effect:—

" Cousin,

"You will already be aware from the letter which the late King my son had written you, what his wishes were relative to the administration of the affairs of this crown; which he desired to confirm by letters patent. Since then it has pleased God to call him to himself. And although the loss which I have just sustained of him, who was naturally the dearest and best treasure of my heart, has thrown me into such deep grief that I desire nothing but

to quit state affairs to seek the tranquillity and repose of a retired life, yet, vanquished and overcome by the earnest entreaty of his last moments that I should undertake this office until the King of Poland, his legitimate successor and heir, should arrive, I have been induced to take charge of the administration and regency of the kingdom till my said son, who I trust will soon be here, shall be advertised of the disaster which has taken place. I am assured that every one knows my zeal and desire for the well-being of this realm.

- "I would not, therefore, spare trouble or pain, nor consider the danger which might reach my own person, hoping to arrange everything with such moderation, that by the good counsel of those in high places, such as yourself, I may, with God's help, establish good repose in the country.
- "I pray you, then, by the devotion and affection which you have always shown to the late King, to use your means to quell and prevent all that may tend to trouble the public good, admonishing those of the noblesse, and other ranks; to continue and persevere in their duty, that thus they may be admired and commended by all nations.
 - "You know well that the will and desire of

the late King was always to preserve and protect those who would live quietly under the benefit of his laws and edicts; and this, I am convinced, is also the wish of his successor, — and I intreat you to observe that the chief object of both can only be to see this kingdom united in itself. You will also assist yourself with all the power and authority you have against those who forget themselves so far as to throw aside their obedience: let the evil be punished and condemned, and let the good be cherished and protected as they merit.

"Praying God, cousin, to have you in his holy and worthy charge.

(Signed) "CATHERINE."

To this was added a somewhat singularly conceived postscript —

"I pray you to write to the King my son, to let him know the good devotion and affection you have to his service, and the fidelity which you feel towards him, as towards his predecessors, sending your letters to me, and I will take care that he receives them incontinently.

"And that you may be certain and aware from whence proceeded the malady of the King my said lord and son, and to take away any suspicion and scruple that might be held to the contrary, I am anxious to inform you that it was a violent fever caused by inflammation of the lungs, which is thought to have been produced by the too great exercise he was in the habit of taking. And having been opened after his death, it has been found that all the interior parts of his body were as healthy and entire as could be seen in a man of good constitution. Therefore it is to be presumed that but for the said violent exercise he might have lived longer. Of these particulars I desired to let you know, and at the same time request that you will allow no person to leave your government at present."

To the Prince of Condé she sent letters of the same mild tendency, exhorting him to peace and goodwill.

She obliged the Duke of Anjou and the King of Navarre to send similar missives to all the governors of provinces, confirming what she had said. All her words hespoke peace and anxiety for the good of the state and the forgetfulness of injuries, while her actions were of the boldest, fiercest, and most malignant character.

With haste that admitted of no delay she insisted on the trial of Montgomery being com-

menced, and exulted in the total impossibility of his again escaping her vengeance.

On arriving in Paris from Caen, where he had been at first carried, the unfortunate Count de Montgomery found that his destination was to the prison of the Conciergerie. To know this, and to feel that his last chance of life was over, were the same.

He passed through the vast court called the Préau, where prisoners were accustomed to take all the exercise allowed them, and was conducted through the obscure corridor which led to the prison allotted him. This frightful dark passage, of great length, seemed to shut out every ray of hope, and lead forward only to despair and death. The usual fee called La Pistole was demanded of him, and, with a step as firm as he could assume, the betrayed warrior advanced to the tower which still retains his name, existing at the present day as the Tour de Montgomeri.

Here he took possession of the gloomy chamber which the vengeance of Catherine had decreed should be his last abode, and here he waited till the leisure of his vindictive enemy should have allowed her to summon the tribunal at whose hands he felt sure he could expect no mercy. He thought of his nine children, whose mother he had married in accordance with the wishes of his family, but who had not replaced his Agnes in his affection; and after so many years, he shed tears of tender memory over his first and only love, and over the unknown fate of his infant son.

His first request was that he might be allowed to receive a visit from Mabille, which was accorded him with more readiness than he expected, and the nurse of the late King was accordingly introduced into his prison.

"Alas! Mabille," said he, taking her hand, " our meetings have always been on sad occasions, and this I doubt not will be the last. I am given over to a powerful enemy, and I cannot hope to escape. There will be no one to hear or attend to my last request; the son of my beloved friend Anthony of Navarre is captive like myself, and cannot aid me. I have little property to leave, - none in France, for all was confiscated here many years since. My children will inherit their mother's wealth, which is considerable; but I had made provision, a fanciful one, you will think, since there was so little hope of my ever recovering him,-for my eldest born; and an estate in Scotland, which was almost all that was left me, has been set apart

for him should he ever be found. The revenues of that estate are not trifling, and I would fain leave them to a young man who saved my life, and to whom I am strangely attached. I have drawn up this paper which I confide to you, and I request that should I be condemned, of which there can be no doubt, you will see that it reaches Claude Emars at La Rochelle."

The nurse uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Is it then Claude who saved you?" exclaimed she.

"Yes," replied the Count, who proceeded to relate all the different situations under which he had met him, and went on further to inform her of his late marriage with Alix. Mabille listened with tears of joy, and inwardly resolved as soon as possible to execute the plan she had formed of visiting the beloved pair in the Protestant town where she might probably end her days in their society.

"Know you aught," said Montgomery, "of the fortunes of that young man? A strange resemblance has struck me in the expression of his countenance which I cannot forget. But, if it really existed, you, Mabille, who knew her well, would have been aware of it. Is there not something of my lost Agnes about him?" "The first time I beheld him," returned the nurse, "the likeness you mention appeared to me forcible, but as he grew older it seemed to have faded away. I know no more of his life than what was communicated to me by Jeanne of Navarre, when she desired me to receive him on his coming to Paris to study. I understood him to be the orphan child of one of the retainers of the House of Navarre, and he never spoke to me of his birth beyond occasionally lamenting, when he first became acquainted with Alix, his insignificance and want of fortune."

"He is worthy of a higher destiny, and his valour and good conduct may lead him to it," said Montgomery with a sigh. "Adieu, dear Mabille," he continued, "let me entreat you to take these letters; and, when an occasion offers for them to be safely transmitted, try to have them sent to my children in England. Conceal them, lest harm should reach you by thus serving one who has no other friend."

"Fear not for me," said Mabille firmly, "the superstition of Catherine will prevent her injuring me; the King in his last illness used an expression which has sunk deep into her mind. 'My curse,' he said, 'on any who would offer harm to my nurse Mabille. Mother, I

charge you, see her provided for; I have no care for any beside.' Catherine immediately settled a pension on me, and leaves me free to go where I please. I trust there is yet hope for you. Your friends are powerful. I will instantly seek La Rochelle, and consult with those who may be better able to assist you. I am not, thank God, feeble or unable to exert myself in spite of age, and by His blessing you may yet be restored to liberty."

They accordingly parted. The Count was left in his dismal prison, and the faithful nurse prepared to set out as quickly as possible on her long journey, inspired with hope which was not destined to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXECUTION.

La coupable ici-bas condamna l'innocent.

MEZERAYE.

Mabille, on returning to her residence in Paris, for she had now quitted her former apartments in the palace, was surprised to find that a stranger awaited her. When she heard that this stranger was a priest, her alarm was excited, and she entered her chamber, where stood the unexpected visitor, in much perturbation. As soon as she came in he uttered an exclamation, and, hastening past her, closed the door, then turning round addressed her in a tone which she did not recognise.

"Sister," said he, "think you we have met before?"

Mabille answered in the negative.

"Then," replied the priest, "my disguise is complete, and I may venture on my mission safely."

"Claude!" exclaimed the nurse, throwing herself into his extended arms, "is it indeed you? Why are you here, in the midst of danger? I thought you safe at La Rochelle, and my purpose was to seek you there."

"Alix is safe there with our friends," replied Claude; "but I am deputed from the good town to find out if there is any possibility of rendering service to the Count de Montgomery, who, we heard, was taken at Domfront, and since removed to Paris. I entreated to be the agent in this business, and, as I am little known and bear no name of note, I was deemed a fitting person for the attempt."

"Alas!" replied Mabille, "I fear little can be done; the Count is a prisoner in the Conciergerie!"

"What!" cried Claude; "have they then kept no faith with him?"

"The Queen-mother is his deadly foe," returned Mabille; "when did she show mercy to any?—and least of all will she to him. His trial is to come on immediately, and the result of it I tremble to contemplate."

"Surely, they dare not" — Claude paused, afraid to end the sentence he had begun.

"The Queen-mother is all-powerful now," said Mabille, "I fear the worst; and see no

means of saving the unfortunate Count, although, but now, I tried to give him hope."

"You have then seen him?" asked Claude, eagerly.

Mabille related their late conversation, and the possibility of her being again admitted to an interview. She told Claude of the generous arrangement the Count had made respecting him, which he heard with tears of gratitude. She even named to him the imagined likeness which Montgomery had discovered; and, on the inquiries of Claude, related the sad history of his early marriage. From this she reverted to her own loss in her husband's disappearance, which Claude had already heard from Alix.

"And you have never from that time," asked Claude, sadly, "heard tidings of your husband, nor the child of Montgomery? Was there no clue by which it would be possible to trace their fate?"

"Alas!" said Mabille, — "that he disappeared is all I know. Where he met his fate I never learnt, nor can imagine. He had merchandise with him, and was probably pillaged of that at the same time his life was taken. The infant was poorly clad, that he might seem the son of a mere tradesman.

I dressed the smiling creature for that fatal journey, and wound round his neck the chain I had taken from his dead mother's neck."

"Mabille!" cried Claude, with an involuntary start of amazement,—"what do you say? Had Montgomery's child a chain of hair round its neck?"

"Yes," said the nurse; — "a chain made by my husband, who was the most skilful workman of his day. It was of the most delicate texture, but as strong as iron: the links were formed like true love-knots, and it was clasped with a gold heart, in which was a secret spring."

"Was it like this?" exclaimed Claude, drawing from his bosom the chain he wore.

Mabille seized it eagerly, ran it rapidly through her fingers, examined it with trembling minuteness, and, pressing the clasp with her nail, it sprang open and disclosed the device beneath.

"This is the chain itself!" cried she. "Oh, Claude!—for the love of mercy tell me how you came by it? — Was it a spoil taken in fight?—Where—how?—Explain!

"Oh! my dear friend," answered Claude,—
"how shall I answer calmly a question which involves the history of my life? That chain

was on my neck when I was found an infant, stabbed by the same banditti who had murdered my father. Anthony of Navarre discovered me and my dead parent. He adopted and brought me up, and this is all I ever knew of my birth! Tis strange that René Bianco alone discovered to me the secret spring which disclosed this device, which I have since striven in vain to find and open."

"René!" cried the nurse, "then it must be so!—No one could open this but he who made it, or one taught the secret.—It was one of the marvels of my husband's art;—René Bianco was a boy in his service at the time this chain was made,—the first he ever completed; and as small fingers were required, his were employed in weaving it, and to him the spring was known. He was then called Florio; but I have long suspected he and our runaway apprentice, the son of the villain whom the Queen-mother favoured, were the same."

Claude then went on to relate every circumstance he ever remembered to have heard respecting his being found by Anthony of Navarre; and as his narrative advanced he became, as well as the nurse, more and more convinced that René and his father must have

been the murderers of the unfortunate merchant, the husband of Mabille; and that he himself could be no other than the son of Montgomery. The account, as he had heard it, was as follows:—

Soon after the death of Henry II., occasioned by the unfortunate accident in the fatal tournament, where the Count de Montgomery's spear pierced his eyebrow, Anthony of Navarre was journeying to Paris, where his arrival had been too long delayed; his friends justly blaming his inactivity in allowing his interests to sleep, while his enemies were at work to injure them. He had not travelled very far beyond the mountainous regions of his territory, when, at the close of day, his party entered a thick wood, and were attracted by cries to a spot, as they approached which they witnessed an unequal conflict between a man of middle age, who had the appearance of a merchant, and a party of banditti. Several had surrounded him, and with blows and menaces were endeavouring to wrest from him the property he carried at his saddle-bow. He appeared to have been defending himself with great resolution; but the recent arbitrary order that no person of the Protestant persuasion should carry arms, gave his adversaries great advantage over him, and told the followers of the king that they beheld one of their own religion in danger. They spurred their horses, but before they could come up with the ruffians they had succeeded in dragging the unfortunate traveller to the ground. He had struck down his foremost assailant, when a youth of about fifteen darted suddenly from the bushes near, and stabbed him with a dagger in the back The traveller fell instantly, and as he did so the sharp cry of an infant was heard, and from his nerveless arms dropped a little child, whom one of the robbers, with a savage laugh and violent gesture, tossed to the other side of the path. The young miscreant, who had killed the unhappy merchant, sprang towards it and struck the child, but at the same moment he was felled by a well-directed blow from Anthony of Navarre's hand, and a general scuffe ensued, in the midst of which one of the robbers mounted the horse of the fallen man, and made off with his booty: the rest, after receiving some severe wounds from the rescuing party, contrived to escape, leaving several of their companions killed, and their victims beside them.

The traveller was quite dead, but it was discovered that the infant was only slightly

hurt; the young assassin having inflicted a broad gash on one side of its forehead. All that could be done was resorted to, to restore animation in the poor man, but in vain. His body was, therefore, conveyed to the Château, where the king proposed to pass the night; and the crying infant was consigned to the care of a female attendant.

Shocked at the scene which he had witnessed, Anthony, whose kindness of heart was proverbial, immediately took an interest in the deserted being whose father—for such he imagined the merchant to be—had been murdered; and he gave directions that when the child was quite recovered, it should be sent under an escort to Pau, and given in charge to Queen Joanna, to whom he wrote the particulars of the event.

The property of the traveller having become the prey of the banditti, no clue was left to guide him in his conjectures as to who the person might be who had met with such an untimely end. The child's dress was such as might be worn by one of middle rank, and the only thing noticeable in its attire was that round the little neck was wrapped several times a chain of dark hair with gold chased clasps of singular and very elaborate workmanship.

- "I am that child!" said Claude, "and your unfortunate husband, dear Mabille, must be he whom I have always mourned as a father!"
- " Alas!" cried Mabille, " the troubles of the times prevented my ever meeting Anthony of Navarre when he arrived at Paris, or long years of suspense might have been spared me, and the Count de Montgomery have ceased the search which he has never abandoned for his lost child. But I see the hand of Providence is in this." continued the nurse, "for your unfortunate father had destined you to the care of the very Prince who unknowingly adopted you. My poor husband would have willingly given himself up a sacrifice could he have known it, but the ways of Heaven are inscrutable. Kneel with me, my child, and thank God, who has, by a miraculous interposition, brought you to the knowledge of a father at a time when his days are numbered. I intreat you to cherish no vain hope, but to be resigned to all that may be decreed for both to endure."
- "Oh, Mabille!" said Claude, with tears of agony, "it is so hard to behold a glimpse of happiness, and to have the cup dashed from our lips when the draught is sweetest!"
 - "Such is the lot of humanity, my son," re-

plied the nurse, solemnly, "we must submit,-

Fervent were the prayers both breathed on that sad occasion, and, their orisons ended, they rose from their knees with hearts more able to bear the trials which awaited them.

It was agreed that Mabille should once more attempt to visit the Count; and that Claude, in his character of a priest, should endeavour to introduce himself into the prison. Early the next day, therefore, they set out with this intention; and, having arrived at the Conciergerie, they mingled with the crowd without, which was as usual gathered round the building anxious to learn how the trial, which had already commenced, proceeded.

There was much excitement amongst the people, and their observations and sarcasms were by no means few or guarded. Although Charles the Ninth had never been popular, even amongst those of his party, yet the sinister reports respecting his death gave him an interest in their minds which they had not felt before. The King of Poland was known to be proud and vindictive, and his character, which promised well in early life, had been long changing for the worse: he had surrounded himself with favourites, and histories were told of his vices,

which were little calculated to endear him to the people, whose affections were directed towards his brother Francis. Duke of Anjou. and whom they would willingly have hailed as King in his stead. Of Henry of Navarre none but the Huguenot party thought, and their strength was vet in its infancy; besides, he was apparently a resigned captive, and some doubts were entertained, both of his capacity and his spirit. The Duke de Guise was the general favourite of the people above all; his popular manners, generosity, splendour, and valour made him their hero, and his partisans were infinitely the most numerous amongst the divided Parisians. Throughout the whole mass, however, of the people there reigned one unanimous feeling, which was that of hatred, contempt, and fear of the Queen-mother.

As her coach was seen approaching the court of the prison, where she was coming for the purpose of hearing in person the trial of her intended victim, murmuring and muttered execrations rose around her; and, in spite of the number of guards who surrounded her, the voice of popular discontent and animosity reached her ears.

"Did René make the sauce for the pike?" exclaimed some, alluding to the report that the King had been poisoned by eating of this fish.

"Who told the King of Poland he should not be long away?" cried others,—for it had transpired that such were the parting words of the mother to her favourite son.

"How came he to live beyond April? Was the poison not strong enough?" was the question of many who had heard that the physicians employed had given this opinion.

" No Italian poisoners-no strangers!"

"Va, Fredigonde!"—"A bas Brunehaut!"
—"Va-t'en, Jesabel!"—"Sorcière!"—"Maudite femme de Sathan!" were the greetings which resounded on all sides; and through these the imperious Queen made her way to the Council-hall where sat the judges deliberating on Montgomery's fate.

When the Count was brought in, so great was the joy felt by Catherine to behold him in her power, and in the pitiable state in which he appeared, having just undergone the torture, that all the reviling of the mob seemed but as music passed away which heralded the pleasure of this meeting. The brave prisoner of war, who had been the hero of so many fights, in all of which he had gloriously distinguished himself,—whose involuntary crime all noble minds had long ago forgiven,—against whom no rancour was felt by any party,—who

dragged into limbs disloca the unjust set and to exhibit rant who rejo He was ac the Duke of plotted agains to implicate ar ed once more gehenne, as the therine sat to blanched, not hate, and final having heard h by his iniquitou dictive mistress. Amidst the h returned to her p Mabille and Cla sentence, applied

Now that he

supposed priest to enter the condemned dungeon for a brief space, and, they were informed, for the last time, as the sentence would be carried into execution with as little delay as possible.

There, in a low damp cell, dark and loathsome,-where a faint light was admitted only through triple bars from a window, -whose walls were twelve feet in thickness, on wet straw, lay the gallant Montgomery, and in that miserable condition he heard a tale which had power to render his dungeon a palace-chamber filled with pomp and splendour. There he pressed to his heart the son of his adored Agnes, and confirmed to him a name which no tyranny could blemish. With the point of the dagger of Claude, on a slate which was found in his cell did Montgomery trace a few lines which acknowledged the discovery of his son at his last moments, and addressing it to Henry of Navarre, the Prince of Condé, and Elizabeth Queen of England, he signed his name for the last time.

This singular document he bade Claude preserve, as it would be all that could prove his birth, beside the testimony of Mabille. He charged him, however, to reveal the secret only to the heads of his party, for the present, lest he should create enemies who might injure the cause by working evil on him. Short was the interview between the father and son, but in those few moments a life of happiness seemed to fleet away. Blessings and prayers were poured by each upon the other; and with grateful feelings of resignation on the part of the Count, and agonized regret on that of Claude, they were obliged to tear themselves from an embrace which they would fain have prolonged.

Claude led away the weeping Mabille, who by no tears or entreaties could prevail on his jailors to allow her to remain and attend on the unfortunate prisoner; and sadly did they return to her dwelling, to spend the night in prayer and lamentation.

Montgomery's closing scene was most edifying. He was taken to the scaffold, erected on the Place de Grève, in an open cart, his hands bound behind him, like the lowest criminal, accompanied by a Cordelier and the headsman.

He spoke firmly to the people, and declared himself innocent of any of the crimes laid to his charge; professed his religion, for which he was happy to die; proclaimed the treachery of his enemies, who had taken him in fair fight, and had obtained his submission under promise of free pardon.

He refused to confess himself to the Bishop

of Narbonne, who was in attendance; nor would he kiss the cross presented to him, nor listen to the priest who remained close to his side. This Cordelier addressed him with arguments intended to prove his religion one of error, and would have persuaded him that he had been deceived in adopting it. He looked at him firmly, and replied,—

"If I have been deceived, it was by one of your order: for it was such a one who first gave me a Bible in French, and who taught me to read it. And to that Cordelier I owe the knowledge of the religion I profess, which I hold to be the only true one; and having lived therein, I trust in God in that faith I shall die this day." *

These were Montgomery's last words; then, kneeling down, he prayed fervently for a few moments before he laid his head upon the block, and, the fatal axe descending, all his misfortunes were ended at a blow. Then followed the butchery common at the period; which, detailed with all its particulars to Catherine, caused her to laugh savagely and exclaim, — "Now I have, indeed, crushed the adder that stung me!"

^{*} Historical.

CHAPTER VII.

BOURGUEIL.

There are more ways than one of sacrificing to the fallen angels.—St. Augustine.

THE Abbey of Bourgueil, on the confines of Anjou, was situated in a wooded country of great seclusion; it seemed as if the good monks who had there fixed their abode had resolved that no worldly foot should intrude on their precincts, so distant were they from the haunts of men, and so shut in by their forests from communion with their kind. Their rule was easy, and seldom was inquiry made as to their interior arrangements; from year to year the same set of brothers performed the same routine of duties, and enjoyed the same indulgences. A flourishing village grew around them, and their abbot always found his revenues regularly paid. As he was frequently a nobleman of the Court, he never interfered with church affairs; his abode, the abbot's house, was always ready for him, but some years had passed since any superior had claimed the right of occupying it.

When the President Bailly, after the loss of his daughter, sought repose from the stirring scenes of which he had been an involuntary witness, he retired to this secluded spot, and finding its gloom and solitude suit the temper of his mind, he resolved there to spend the remainder of his life. He had made vain endeavours to discover the fate of Alix, and at length had come to the sad conclusion that, her profession of faith having been discovered, her life had fallen a sacrifice to her imprudent avowal of the truth. Naturally gloomy, the disappointment of his only hope in life had deepened the severity of his character, and added another shade to his sadness; amidst the thick shadows of the antique trees which surrounded his monastic abode he delighted to sit for hours, brooding over his sorrows and indulging in them.

All the energy which his former occupations had called into action had faded away: his fondness for wealth and power, now that he had attained both, seemed suddenly to have evaporated, and he became a lonely, musing, melancholy man.

which never quillity of th to the simple row capacitie required. almost as a sa and respect, garded with a he never ming was frugal, a servant, who l of Alix, he sti were new. M his young mist den loss; but nicative and su obtain the sligh well that a mys marked her soli visits of the nur ness of his clas tachment which

of their present life, and he longed for the bustle and amusement of Paris, to which he had been always accustomed. The villagers hailed his presence in their cottages, and his ready jest and gay demeanour contrasted agreeably his master's morose and haughty manner. He could not resist occasionally hinting at the events which had taken place in the President's family, and allowed himself sometimes to express his regret and surmises respecting Alix. A word is sufficient with the ignorant to create a wonder, and the love of the marvellous was a foible amongst the good people of the little town of Bourgueil, not uncommon in places where subjects for gossip are difficult to be met with. It was currently reported, therefore, that the President Bailly was a magician; that his daughter, having been required by the evil spirit whom he served, as a sacrifice, he had been obliged to yield her up, by which means he had saved his soul, and by future penitence and prayer he hoped to redeem his former sins.

This accounted for his sadness and his piety most satisfactorily, and the mystery which Marcel could not attempt to explain respecting Alix gave every colour to so natural a conclusion.

[&]quot;For you know," said an old peasant,

"strange things happen in Paris in these times. I was there once, when a boy, and such scenes as I saw might make one credit any judgment that could come upon its inhabitants. They live without any thought but pleasure; riding about the streets in gold chariots, and on horses decked out finer than the high altar of St. Polycarp in the abbey church. Profane jesters and stage-players are to be seen in the market-places; no one does any work, and dancing and junketing are the only occupations. The devil goes his nightly rounds, and in spite of the priests and monks, who are the only good people there, there is not a night that he does not carry off his prey."

This and similar relations were heard with fear and trembling by the groups, who, seated beneath the village trees, listened frequently to such accounts, firmly believing every syllable; indeed they considered that so many extraordinary events had happened in their own neighbourhood, notwithstanding the exertions of the holy brotherhood, that they could believe anything of so wicked a place as the capital.

For instance, at a very short distance from Bourgueil, on the road to Tours,—which was also known to be a dangerous abode, only preserved from utter destruction by the prayers of the monks of Marmontier,-there was a barren moor, on which malefactors were sometimes hung in chains. It was recorded that a party of villagers once returning from the market at Bourgueil to Benest, a village a few leagues off, had in the dusk of evening occasion to pass across this moor; some of them had been drinking pretty freely, and as they were singing and talking loudly to keep up their spirits in this dismal spot, one amongst them, who was a great boaster, bragged that he would invite the dead man who hung upon the gibbet to join their party. Accordingly he called out in a lusty voice, "Comrade,-gueux de larron !-do you hear?-come down from your tree and have a dance with your betters, in the name of the blessed St. Polycarp!"

Scarcely had he uttered this impious exhortation, than a clanking of chains was heard, and a hollow voice answered from the gibbet, "Oui oui,—hau! hau! je viens, attendez moi!" and descending from the black and menacing elevation where he had swung, down came the corpse and pursued the affrighted villagers, who at the first clank of his chain had taken to their heels; the ghastly figure of the dead thief followed them with loud cries and peals of fiendish laughter, till they reached the cross of

Benest, and there it vanished, while they all hurried to their homes, half dead with terror and remorse, and it required many masses to be said by the holy brothers of the abbey before the evil spirit was laid. Whenever any untoward event is about to happen in the bourg. some traveller is sure to be pursued by this "Larron pendu," till within sight of the abbey walls. A saving was rife throughout Tourraine. which confirmed the truth of this account:-

> "Vignerons, pendus à Bourgueil, N'ont besoin de fust ni cercueil."

The story had been explained at the time by a blacksmith of Benest, who stated that he had set out an hour or two earlier on that eventful night on his way home, but being rather sleepy, or, it may be, somewhat overcome by the last generous glass he had indulged in, he laid himself down to repose on the moor, not aware of his proximity to the gallows and its denizen. That he was awakened by the cries of his companions, had started up, gathered his tools together as quickly as possible—for they had fallen from his basket. -and in so doing made a great clashing of iron; hearing the hallooing, and finding where he was, and that the wind waved the dead body

to and fro, he was seized with a panic, and ran after his friends, calling on them to stop with all his might.

This was considered an invention of the Evil One; the blacksmith was ever after looked upon with an eye of suspicion, and the legend of the "Larron pendu" was believed with pious integrity from that time.

One night a vigneron entered the bourg in great trepidation, having been, as he described, pursued to the very walls by this spectre, who had as usual disappeared at the convent gates; he related that, this time, it had appeared on horseback, and rode so furiously that, though he exerted all his speed and took the shortest cut across the meadows, he could scarcely escape being overtaken. Consternation spread through the little town, and something fearfully extraordinary was expected to happen before long. Nothing of moment, however, took place, except the announcement of an arrival at the abbot's house of a visitor; how he came, no one could say, - for he had not rested at the town nor been seen by any one, and the upper road to the house by the meadows was never attempted by travellers in consequence of the swamps and the danger apprehended from evil spirits. However, this visitor could have come

no other way, and he must be either something supernatural or be well acquainted with the country. Marcel was soon surrounded, and inundated with questions as to his business and the manner of his arrival.

"With respect to his coming," said Marcel, "he rode from Tours, and had much difficulty in finding this out-of-the-way place."

"What! — difficulty in finding the abbey of the blessed St. Polycarp? He must be a strange man not to know where that is!" exclaimed several.

"Well, he found no one to ask, for leagues, he says," continued Marcel; "and, at last, as he was crossing the great moor hard by, he espied a man asleep on the ground, whom he roused, and having called to him, instead of telling him the way, he began running with all his might and roaring for help; he rode as fast as he could after him, and only stopped at the abbey gates, — having found a guide without knowing it."

Significant glances were exchanged by the peasants, who clearly saw that all could not be right in this instance, and to whom the fallacy of the story was evident, as they had previously heard Jean le vigneron's account, and knew what to trust to. However, no remarks were

made, and the circumstances of the stranger's arrival were not commented on openly; when, however, he was seen constantly to accompany the President to church, and exhibited signs of extreme devotion, it was surmised that he must be in some way or other connected with the former deeds of the lay abbot.

In this they were not mistaken,—for this visitor was no other than René Bianco.

The subtle Italian had resolved to follow the advice of his royal mistress; and, trusting to his own art and talent, he felt secure of regaining the ascendancy over Bailly, of which the latter had been sensible during the period of their intimacy. Introducing himself in this sudden manner, the President had no opportunity of refusing his visit; and, though at first it was most distasteful to him, by degrees he was imposed on by the air of sadness and resignation which René assumed. He avoided at first revealing all he had discovered relative to Alix; but at length, with apparent reluctance, he confessed that he knew what had become of her.

"Oh, tell me!" exclaimed Bailly, — "let me hear of my poor child, although I am never to behold her more!"

"It were better, perhaps, that you should



feelings. "I have wealth still preserved, who shall her?"

"She is in the revolt chelle!" replied Bianco. of her flight was the C she is now protected by late secretary, who has ma by cruelties and enormiti the faithful subjects of the dren of our holy church! while the President, hor in silence.—"Yes," he hoped to call her back t spared no pains. The (has used every means, a exert my best endeavour took a journey to La F and with infinite danger

groom. She refused to listen to my representations; professed her change of religion, — for she is now a Huguenot,—and has fallen into the habits and customs of that depraved sect. All this is hard for a father to hear, and nothing but your importunity could have drawn it from me. I came here merely with a hope of alleviating your solitary sorrow, and had purposed to leave you in ignorance of this further misfortune."

"René," said the President, "you tell me of that which, from any but yourself, who are an injured person and whom I pity, I could not listen to for a moment. The perfect purity of my daughter it would be as impossible to make me discredit, as that she is my own child. I know her to be misled by the errors of this accursed belief, and I believe her to have been imposed upon; but dare not to insinuate aught against her honour in my hearing!"

Bailly's eyes flashed with indignation as he spoke, and René saw that he had gone too far.

"The blessed saints forbid," exclaimed he, with well-feigned astonishment, "that I should utter a syllable which could be construed into such a meaning! Alix, I am convinced, is virtue itself! but she is in dangerous hands,

and is deeply imbued with the fallacies of the new religion; and her position, with regard to this minion, is one which may give cause for much scandal."

"I will immediately write, and command her to leave the town!" exclaimed Bailly. "During the truce which now exists, it will not be difficult to send to her, and I will charge her, by her duty to her father, to obey me instantly."

"Do so," said René, with apparent joy. "Nothing would be so grateful to my feelings as once more to behold her safe in your protection. For myself, although I might claim her promise, I disdain to influence her feelings; and, however unwillingly, abandon my right, trusting that time may yet prove to her my devotion."

After much more conversation to the same purpose, in which René contrived to deceive the President into a belief of his own generosity and willingness to serve him and his daughter, Bailly determined to write to Alix, and call upon her to return to him.

This letter he confided to René, who, of course, took care that it should never reach its destination.

Marcel, in the mean time, jealous of the in-

timacy of his master with the Italian, whom he had always dreaded, began, from words which Bailly had dropped, to suspect that some scheme was going on which tended to little good. He had vainly endeavoured to obtain the means of discovering the purport of the long consultations which took place between the President and his Florentine friend; and annoyed at being foiled in what he considered part of his privilege, to know all his master's concerns, he set himself resolutely about finding out the truth.

All this time Alix, in the absence of her husband at Paris, was mourning over the ill success of her appeals to her father. Her heart was torn with her contending duties to him and to the confiding Claude, who had risked so much to save and protect her. She had written to her father, and set forth, with all the moving eloquence of truth, her obligations to him whose wife she now was; — had related all her sorrows, perils, and escapes; the reception she had met with from De Hommet, and all the particulars of her position; trusting that he would forgive the step she had thought it most prudent to take, and render her happy in his blessing.

These letters, it is scarcely necessary to say,

were never received by Bailly. René had placed his emissaries in the house of the President in Paris; and all passed through his hands, were read and destroyed.

When Claude, for so must still be called the attainted and outlawed Gabriel de Lorges Count de Montgomery, to whom his unfortunate father could not even leave a name in France,-when Claude quitted Paris and the faithful Mabille. he bent his course by unfrequented ways in order to escape the vigilance of the foes of his religion; and with a heavy heart began his journev back to his beloved Alix, to whom he longed to communicate his secret and his grief. Before. however, he permitted himself to think of his own affairs he resolved to make his way into Picardy, where the Prince of Condé awaited tidings from his party, which should determine him whether to follow, or not, the advice already offered him of flying to Germany where, the Marshals d'Anville and Montmorency were ready with a strong force to afford their aid. It was of the utmost importance that the Prince should be made aware of the fate of the gallant Montgomery, and Claude saw the necessity of speed in the communication: he therefore in various disguises traversed the country, and arrived in Picardy, where he found the Prince prepared

for immediate action. Nothing could exceed his horror and indignation at the recital of Claude; and while he recognised the son of the murdered hero, he could only afford him tears and regret. He at first urged him to join the party in Germany, but on hearing all the ties of Claude at La Rochelle, he agreed that greater service could be done to the cause by his remaining in France. He informed Claude that his princess had lately quitted him to remain at his château in the Chartrain with her ladies and attendants: he should, therefore, find no difficulty in leaving France, and should forthwith commence his journey with all the men he could procure.

Claude then recommenced his wanderings, and, after traversing Normandy, and communicating with all the chiefs of the party, he crossed the Loire, and once more returned to La Rochelle, where he was warmly greeted by all his friends, to whom he related the melancholy story of the Count's betrayal. The astonishment of Alix was extreme on hearing the mystery of his birth explained; and, while she hailed the son of the martyr to the cause of religion, she wept bitterly for his loss.

But Claude soon discovered that a secret grief was preying on her mind, and, with the deepest sympathy, he heard of her disappointment # her father's obdurate silence. He knew the President was at his abbey in Anjou, have made all the inquiries he dared venture at passed through that part of the country; while he endeavoured to soothe the agitated feelings of his wife, he felt that the hard unbending character of her father afforded then little hope. Alix, however, could not imagine that the tenderness which she knew existed is his heart towards her could be thus entirely obliterated: she suggested the possibility of treachery, and the chances that her letters had not reached him. Claude, at length, resolved to relieve her mind at all hazards; and considering that at the present moment the harassing warfare which had been recommenced against the Rochellois was suspended, and 1 short truce existed, he hoped that by a personal interview with Bailly he might be able to soften his mind towards them.

Having conceived this plan he imparted it to Alix.

"I can," said he, "but fail at last; but we shall know the worst, and shall cease to be agonized by suspense."

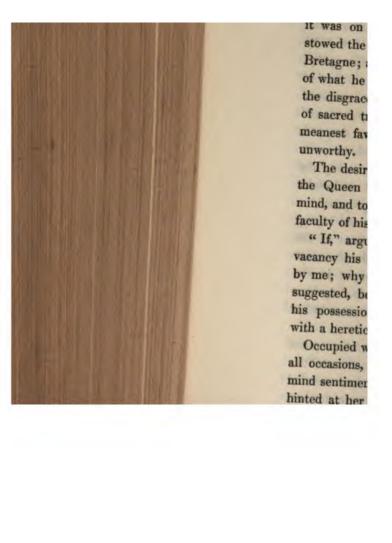
"Your fears," urged he to her objections, magnify the danger. I know the country well, am an experienced traveller, in my accustomed disguise of a mendicant friar I can go securely, and my return, I am persuaded, will bring you joy."

"No, Claude!" cried Alix, "I will repress this anxiety; since my father lives I will be content to remain at a distance from him—nay, separated for ever, rather than risk the loss of one still dearer. How could I have imagined such a project? Let us never think of it more."

Though the subject was at that time dropped, Claude failed not at different periods to renew it; and at length succeeded in obtaining the consent of his wife that he should undertake the journey, disguised as had been proposed.

Alix complied with the less reluctance, hoping that he might return before the term of the truce was expired. They parted, therefore, not without many tears, and Alix sought in the society of Lesselline to lose the foreboding fears which immediately on his departure rose in her mind.

The regard of Bailly for his perfidious guest had, meanwhile, daily augmented; the abilities and accomplishments which had recommended René to the favour of Catherine were not lost on the President, who, having now renounced all public occupation, devoted his hours to re-



continued to deceive Bailly with the idea that she had been the means of his escape. The scene on the night of St. Bartholomew and her resolute tenderness would sometimes contradict his insinuation to the father's heart; but so artfully did he work on his credulity that his words soon effaced the slight impressions of reviving tenderness.

At length René ventured on the subject on which his hopes depended, and cautiously and carefully worked his way till Bailly was induced to agree that he should be named by his will his successor in the Abbey, leaving him funds to secure its possession. This his conscience allowed him without difficulty to do, as he considered that the religion of Alix and her husband effectually prevented them or their children from inheriting such property, and the alienation of so large a portion he considered a due punishment for her offence. The anxious advice and even entreaties of René failed, however, to induce him to deprive her of all claim on his large fortune, and a very considerable proportion was still left unmentioned as naturally belonging to Alix at his death. Annoyed at this circumstance. René endeavoured to derive consolation from the hope that, in the event of Alix making demand of her rights, he should have it

in his power to prevent her obtaining justice in consequence of her faith.

It was at this moment that he was deeply annoyed by receiving a peremptory summons from his royal mistress to join her in Paris without a moment's delay, as the King of Poland was on his way from Cracow, and her intention was to give him the meeting at Lyons. She informed him that his leave of absence could be extended no longer, as she required him to execute some affairs of the greatest importance.

"I will not prevent your returning to Anjou on my departure," she wrote; "therefore fail not, on receipt of this, to hasten to Paris, as you value my favour."

"Her favour! cried René bitterly,—"what does it bring me?—little but promises. I have, in the course of my service, it is true, had large sums from her, but her gifts to others have been equal if not greater, and I have only contributed to ruin the royal exchequer. I should have gained all—by the saints! I have richly earned it!—this last act of hers, however, shall not go unrevenged: to prefer that ignorant pretender to me who have devoted my science to her for years! But I must obey her still: she is now all powerful, and will continue so long under her son Henry's sway. I must not lose my

labour by wearying at the last. There is little fear of Alix writing again to her father during my absence; her last letter was utterly desponding, and she called it her last appeal. As she received no reply, of course she will venture no more—at least for some time,—and, doubtless, I shall return soon, as Catherine will be impatient to embrace her darling son."

Thus reasoning, he calmed his uneasiness, and leaving Bailly, who parted with him with regret, he hastened to Paris and his mysterious mistress.

CHAPTER VIIL

THE LETTER.

Celle qui git ici n'avoit point de seconde,
En vertus, en beauté, en graces, en honneur,
Et pour dire en un mot ce qu'elle eut de bonheur,
Ci gisent les Amours et les Graces du monde.

PASSERAT on Marie de Clèves.

"BIANCO," said Queen Catherine, when obeying her summons, he hastened to present himself before her, immediately on his arrivalin Paris,-" Bianco, I have intercepted a letter from the King of France and Poland, addressed to Marie wife of Condé. It contains a promise. which, if kept, would destroy all my plans for the future, and a strong measure must annul it. I had no idea that Henry really loved this girl so much. I thought absence would weaken or destroy his affection, and besides, I know he has written tenderly to La Chateauneuf,-but that must have been but to deceive me. Read this strange letter, and judge what should be done." René took the paper, not without emotion.

for he observed the whole of it written in sanguine characters, and thus it ran:—

" MARIE, adored of my soul. Tortured and distracted, in absence from her who is my existence, I write to you with a pen dipped in my own blood, kneeling at the altar of the Blessed Virgin, to give you news of one who night and day counts only the moments which intervene between our meeting. I am, oh joyful certainty! I am King of France. My first act is to hail you as my Queen, to promise you by all I hold sacred in Heaven and on earth, that not a week shall pass when once I set foot on the soil of my native country, before I will lead you to the altar, and hear you proclaimed my wife. Receive this solemn vow, my own beloved Marie, and expect the accomplishment of it the instant I can announce to you the dissolution of that hateful contract which has hitherto separated us. Rome is propitious, there will be no obstacles; we shall be united for ever, and no power shall part us.

(Signed) "HENRY,

"King of France and Poland."

René turned the letter over in his hand, and read the superscription to the Princess Marie de Condé. "This, of course, she will never receive," said he, coolly.

"You are dull, René," said Catherine, with a peculiar smile. "I shall despatch it instantly, and you are to be the messenger to bear it to her."

"I perceive," answered the Italian. "Madonna, your wit far passes mine. Methinks this sheet, travel-stained and worn, should be refreshed with certain perfumes which will add greater vigour to the letters, and impart a softer feeling to the sense."

"You have such perfumes, René," said the Queen; "spare them not, however costly,—they will save a crown. Go,—bear her this letter, and on your return bring me back word that I have no more cause of fear."

"Madonna," said the poisoner, deliberately, "there is a metallic power, one grain of which touching the lips will act like the look of the basilisk, and life shall be extinct in an instant. This placed upon the paper over the name of 'Henry,' will effect our purpose. Marie will seize upon the letter,—she will devour its contents,—she will kiss the signature. Let her do so, and you have no more to fear."

"But is this a sure method, Bianco?" gasped Catherine. "Might it not fail?"

"It will not," he replied. "But there are other means known to him to whom this secret has been revealed. Madonna, I hold the lives of men in my hand,—their existence depends on my breath; when I choose to exert my power all are my slaves," and he laughed triumphantly. "I must have for this service much gold, for the knowledge was dearly bought; can you at once supply me? Some who have claims upon me clamour for their dues, and I have not wherewithal to satisfy them."

"René," said the Queen, "I have exhausted all my funds at this moment, and know not where to turn; the fêtes we must give on the King's arrival must dazzle by their splendour, -they shall excel all others. His coronation and his marriage," she continued, smiling, "his marriage with Louisa of Lorraine will be costly, and demand much gold; but your wants shall be supplied. Mark how I purpose to procure large means. In the Sainte Chapelle of the palace is a cross, of value not to be named, for in it is enclosed a large piece of the true cross. This the Holy Father has long sued for, and would give any sum to obtain, but the selfish churchmen of Paris would refuse to part with their treasure. Let a determined few take it in secrecy and silence from the altar, and,

once transferred to Rome, gold would come pouring in upon us. The saints forbid that I should do an act of sacrilege, or dare to injure the sacred symbol! It is but obeying the command of the great head of our religion, to whom I have long promised it, and it will be placed in a fitter sanctuary than here, where heretics and schismatics pollute our altars with their deceptive vows."

"True," returned Bianco, "it is to aid the good cause, and all means are legitimate which have that for their object."

"Let it be done, René, and ask me not how," said the Queen; "the chapel doors need not be closed that night, and can seem forced if necessary. You no doubt know Italians ready to return to their own country, who will be glad to travel protected by the holy pledge."

"Florio has a chosen band ready and most willing for the service," replied René; "say no more, Madonna, you shall in all things be obeyed."

"Go first and bear this letter to the expectant Princess," said Catherine, "and on your return inform me of her fate. I purpose instantly setting forth to meet the King at Lyons; no time is to be lost; we must despatch business quickly, and while the Court is absent it will be easy to suppose that a robbery might take place."

"Thanks, good Madonna," said René, kissing her extended hand; "we will perform miracles if necessary."

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The château of the Prince de Condé, in the Chartrain, was a moated building, strongly constructed, with huge towers and outer defences, capable of much resistance in case of assault. It was gloomy and vast, and stood in the midst of a flat corn country, commanding an extensive view for leagues round; the elevated spires of the magnificent cathedral of Chartres forming a conspicuous feature, as they towered above the woods, and attracted the eye from a great distance. Thick forests closed the castle in. whose recesses afforded sport to the huntsman; for there the deer and wild boar had their haunts, and the wolf occasionally was made an object of the chace; but pastime of this description had now been laid aside. The Prince had been detained so long at Paris, little less than a prisoner, that his château of Villebon had remained unvisited; and when he recovered a nominal liberation, he employed it in planning an escape from the thraldom in which he was held. He had sent the Princess to this retreat.

-far from the Court and its seductions-in hearing of the death of the King; and he hoped that change of scene and circumstances had obliterated, in the mind of Henry the Third is memory of a passion disgraceful to the honourd his wife. When he fled to Germany, he consdered that Marie was sufficiently guarded in his castle to prevent any danger, and he had laid at her strict and determined commands that, on to pretence, should she leave its walls. Nothing could be so utterly sad and forlorn as the postion of the unfortunate Marie. - Deprived of all society but that of her dependents; wretched with her husband, whose affections she had never possessed, and who treated her with suspicion and distant coolness; her heart entirely given to Henry of Valois, in whom she fondly imagined existed every virtue, of which he was, in fact, devoid; trembling to think of him, vet dwelling on his name, -alive to all that concerned him, yet afraid to inquire the slightest particular;-it was, however, impossible to keep from her the knowledge of the death of Charles and a thousand emotions filled her mind when she reflected on the consequences of that event. Letters had secretly been conveyed to her, on the first departure of her royal lover, through the Queen of Navarre; but for some time none

had reached her, and her spirits and health had sunk in consequence. She had grown silent, and more than usually pensive; -ceased to occupy herself with her usual employments, and mournfully dreamed away her existence in repressed hope and regret. She imagined it possible that his heart had ceased to beat so warmly for her, - that he would now be able to bear their separation, - that his promises were by degrees being effaced from his mind. She tried to think of her domestic obligations, - she resolved to banish him from her thoughts, or, at least, not to allow them to dwell so incessantly upon his image; - she endeavoured to persuade herself that the time might come when she should be able to replace her love for him by the duty she owed her husband .- Alas! she sighed: -

It may be that I love thee not —
How happy if my soul
At length its bondage had forgot,
And spurn'd its late control:
Like some bright native of the sky,
Escaped to blessed liberty!

It may be that, like wither'd flowers,
Whose fragrant breath is gone,—
I can forget those summer hours,
Which sweetly lingered on:—
That sparkling stream, that willowy shore
May be my Paradise no more!

134 THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

It may be other eyes may seem
As soft, as kind as thine;
The glory of another dream
May o'er my fancy shine;
And other voices speak as well
All that thy lips alone could tell!

And forms may glide of equal grace,
Where once thy step has been;
And I shall scarce observe thy place
Is vacant in the scene:—
Nor, when thy fav'rite haunts I see,
Remember they had charms for thee.

And I may know thee near, nor seek
To meet those eyes of day;
In music's tone may hear thee speak,
And turn unmoved away:—
I may renounce thee!—may forget—
The time may come—but, oh!—not yet!

Many mournful weeks passed in this solitary manner; and, though the Princess tried to persuade herself that she no longer desired to hear from her lover, she had chosen for her favourite retreat a chamber in one of the towers, which overlooked the principal entrance to the castle, in order that she might see the couriers as they went and came, with orders from her husband, to the troops quartered within the buildings of

the great court of the château, with a faint hope that some in royal livery might one day meet her sight. Marguerite had been strangely silent of late on the subject of her brother, and in her previous letters had ventured advice more prudent than encouraging respecting him. Everything tended to depress her; and so sensitive had she grown from long and ineffectual watching, that her light and graceful figure became thin and fragile, and her cheek, once all bloom, as pale as snow.

She was looking one morning from her tower window towards the long avenue of high lindens, which formed a vista from the castle gates, and by which way all expresses must come, when she beheld a troop of horsemen galloping down the road with great speed, in the suite of a royal messenger, whom she recognised as wearing the costume of those attached to the service of the Queen-mother. Her heart beat violently: she had scarcely power to breathe or to look as they rapidly approached the gates, and rang the great bell which announced their arrival. The drawbridge was lowered instantly, and the party were received into the inner court. She saw no more, but waited in trembling anxiety till the messenger

should be announced to her. At length she was informed of his request to see her, in order to deliver papers of importance. According to the etiquette observed at the time, she desired that he might be conducted to her hall of audience, and leaving her tower she entered the large apartment where she was accustomed to receive visitors of importance.

It was a chamber very long and wide, with a row of high windows on each side; on the ceiling, the rafters of which were of dark oak, were emblazoned the arms of Condé; the walls were hung with tapestry representing classical subjects on a gigantic scale, and the wood-work between was massively carved. A dais rose between two of the windows, where was placed a throne and canopy of rich dark velvet, and it was here that the delicate and lovely Marie was seated when the royal messenger was announced.

René Bianco, meantime, had been conducted into a lower chamber, fitted up with warlike ornaments of spear and shield, and adorned with enormous pictures of the family of Condé, together with some of that of D'Estouteville, by whom the castle was built and originally possessed. When summoned to the presence of the Princess, he mounted the broad stone

spiral staircase with a step less assured than usual, and he trembled as he entered the large, gloomy chamber, where, at the upper end, sat the beautiful and innocent creature who had been marked as a victim.

He approached, and knelt on the lower step of the dais, when Marie exclaimed,

"Ah! Messire René, I rejoice to see you; —tell me, is the Queen of Navarre well, and her Grace the Queen-mother?—What news do you bring me?"

"Gracious lady," replied Bianco, "their Majesties are well, and happy in the expectation of our beloved Sovereign's speedy arrival from Poland. They purpose immediately to set out on their way to meet him."

He then delivered the despatches with which he was charged, and Marie opened them. In that of the Queen-mother was enclosed the fatal letter from Henry of Valois, and as Marie looked at the superscription she changed colour and trembled violently; laying it, for a moment, on her lap, she perused the contents of Catherine's missive, which expressed the utmost tenderness and affection, and hinted at the future in a manner at the same time mysterious and flattering. She then took up the letter of Henry, and opening it endeavoured to read; but her

head grew giddy, her agitation became extreme, and gathering the papers together, first placing that in her bosom, she quitted the chamber, and retired to her private chamber in the tows.

René remained rooted to the spot, his face pale as death, -- his eyes haggard, -- his knees shaking,—and his whole appearance such as would have betrayed to an observer his guilty feelings; but he had been admitted alone to the Princess, her attendants had all withdrawn into the adjoining corridor, and there was no witness to the struggle in his bosom. He listened - started - bent his ear towards the opposite door - gasped for breath - and pressed his hands to his head, in an agony of impatient expectation. For the first time in his life he regretted his crime. — for the first time he hoped that his plan would fail. Marie was so young, - so lovely, - so confiding! She had smiled with such innocent sweetness as she welcomed her destroyer, that she had effected at least a momentary change in his nature.

"Catherine must be a fiend," exclaimed he, "to murder such a creature! And what am I?

— Oh. God!"

At that moment he was startled by a sharp, shrill, wild cry from the tower chamber, and a dull sound as of a falling object: his hair rose,

— his blood was chilled in his veins, — he clenched his hands and ground his teeth in agony; the sound had been heard by others, it was so strange and unnatural that it struck on the ear as something awful and portentous. Several of the Princess's attendants hurried from the adjoining corridor and entered the room; he was prepared for what followed,— shrieks and cries echoed through the castle; the voice of wailing and lamentation filled the place, and all the horror of the deed was made manifest to his senses.

Marie had been found lying on the ground, her hand pressed to her heart with the fatal letter tightly held,—the rest of the papers were scattered round, and had evidently been thrown from her when seized with the sudden deathpang.

She no longer breathed, although she was still warm and the colour had not faded from her cheek; she must have died in an instant, as if struck with lightning; and her spirit had departed at the moment when she became conscious that all her earthly hopes were accomplished.

Had she lived, it would have been but to learn the fallacy of those hopes, — to have withered by slow degrees under the fearful conviction of the unworthiness of him she adored: remorse, regret, sorrow and despair were saved her; she fell a victim innocent and happy, and Heaven received her before the taint of sin had rendered her unfit for its pure abodes.

Bianco, with a violent effort, roused himself from his stupor, and amidst the tears and exclamations of all around ordered that his train should be ready instantly to set forth on his return.

"Let this fatal event be kept secret for the present," said he, "lest it reach the ears of those of the Court, and they become too suddenly aware of their misfortune. I undertake to report it with proper care to the Queenmother and the family of the unfortunate Princess. Such occurrences are not unusual,—probably the contents of the letters of which I was, by evil chance, the bearer were of a nature to occasion violent agitation; and the blood suddenly rushing to the heart has occasioned the loss of life. My embassy has had a sad result, and is one which, to the last moment of my life, I shall reflect on with agonized remembrance."

He mounted his horse, and followed by his people rode slowly from the castle; when half way up the avenue he beheld, emerging from the thick wood which extended on each side, a young fawn, which, with its graceful pace, ran before him till he reached the high iron gates leading to the road beyond, then suddenly stopping turned its full gaze upon him; from the large brilliant eyes two heavy tear-drops seemed falling, and the expression of the countenance was full of reproach. He started, and spurred his horse, which plunged and snorted and refused to advance, when, suddenly, the figure of the fawn became indistinct, and in a moment entirely disappeared from his sight: on rushed his steed, and dashing through the gates took, with headlong rapidity, its way towards the town of Courville, and from thence to Chartres, where, hurrying to the cathedral, the superstitious and remorse-stricken Italian lost no time in prostrating himself before the shrine of the miraculous Black Virgin of Chartres, to whom he poured out a prayer of supplication and entreaty, that he might be delivered from the feeling of horror which oppressed him. After having done so, he felt relieved, and by the time he had reached Paris, every human sentiment of redeeming sorrow was effaced from his soul.

The Queen-mother and her party had already set out, but she had directed René to intimate

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to her by a concerted token, forwarded by a courier, the success of her scheme, and at an early stage of her journey she became aware of the truth. Not a shade of regret, not a pang of remorse mingled with the exultation which this news gave to her mind; carefully concealing her fatal knowledge she hurried on, and amidst every outward demonstration of welcome and honour reached Lyons, the city at which she was to await the arrival of Henry the Third from Poland.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW KING.

Pr'ythee see there!
Behold! look! lo! how say you?
MACBETH.

ALONG the shore of the Saone, on the parapet of the port called de la Feuillée, were seated, in rows, a great number of young women, whose costume was peculiarly attractive, even if their remarkable beauty had not excited the admiration of the passer-by. They were dressed in bodices and petticoats of dazzling whiteness; their heads and fine hair covered with large straw hats, tied under the chin with a bow of coloured ribbon. Some of them balanced an oar or a boat-hook in their hands, or were twisting pieces of rope, and gazing with that air, half listless, half anxious, which told that they were waiting to be employed. These were, in fact, the batelières of the neat little boats called bèches, which lay along the river-side, covered

with their awnings of linen stretched over hoops, and inviting the inhabitants of Lyons to trust themselves to the guidance of these nymphs of the stream on a short voyage to l'isle Barbe and the opposite shores.

"And are the Queen-mother and all the court ladies really coming?" said one of the young girls,—" we shall have a busy time while they stay, and pocket many a denier."

"We had need," said an elderly woman, with a surly air; "for little enough has been doing of late. I thought when all the Huguenots were rooted out we were to be better off: but though we destroyed the vermin till the river would hold no more bodies, we are just as poor as ever."

"Don't talk of it, Manon," answered another of the party; "it makes my heart bleed whenever I hear it named; and they say the late King died of grief for what he had been made to do;—and it's treason to talk about it now."

"Henry of Navarre is to come with the Court," observed a young coquette, adjusting her straw hat. "Does he admire fair beauties or dark, do they say?"

"Either," returned a laughing companion; "none come amiss to him: —but the scores of

young gallants there will be ! — we shall never have our oars idle !"

"Is the new King expected to-night?" asked another.

"He'll come too soon, arrive when he will," rejoined an old woman. "France wants something better than a coxcomb and a madman, like this and the last, for her King. The young Francis is worth all the rest, and he must be born too late."

"Well, it's all one to us, so as we get employed," said another. "Changes and troubles may do good to these great folks, but they ruin little ones. Hark! the bells are ringing!—the guns are firing!—the King's arrived! Vive Henri Trois!—vive la Reine Mère!—Viva! Viva!"—

And all the fair batelières deserted their post to join the shouting and expectant crowd, who were hailing the arrival of the fugitive King of Poland in his dominions.

Although late in the year, the season was as fine as frequently happens in the middle of summer; and the sun shone brilliantly on the magnificent cavalcade of the Queen-mother and her ladies, and the Queen of Navarre and her suite, as it wound along the mountain of Fourvières, which, together with that of St. Sebastian, forms an amphitheatre, commanding the majestic Saône, which confines within its embrace, and that of the Rhône, the gay and picturesque city of Lyons. Nothing could exceed the varied and beautiful view from the elevated road by which the royal party advanced;—hills, covered with verdure, rose on every side, the two grand rivers meeting at their feet; the city, with all its domes, and spires, and turrets, rising from their floods; and the magnificent and shadowy chain of the Alps in the eastern perspective.

The equipages of the two Queens, and the appointments of their trains, were gorgeous in the extreme; nothing was wanting to show honour to the beloved son of Catherine; and the Queen of Navarre, whose taste for splendour and carelessness of expense were not inferior to her mother's, was not sorry to have an opportunity of displaying her taste on this occasion.

The Queen-mother, with five of her ladies, appeared in a chariot covered with gilding and painting, laquais, dressed in splendid liveries, hanging on to the large portières, and pages, and a host of attendants running before and by the side. On great occasions, like the present, the Grande Bande, consisting of two hundred ladies, all of them of high quality, attended

their royal mistress; some in carriages richly ornamented, others on horseback, their steeds gallantly caparisoned, and all accompanied by pages and valets. But the most remarkable equipage was that of the Queen of Navarre, who has herself described a similar one in her own Memoirs. It was a litière of large size, supported by light and elegant gilt pillars; the interior was hung with curtains of Spanish velvet of carnation colour, deeply bordered with gold embroidery; and from the top depended draperies of white silk in knots with devices. Between each pillar were glasses brilliantly painted, each pane also bearing devices, to the number of forty; and great ingenuity had been displayed in contriving these, which were for the most part, allusive to the power and influence of the sun, moon, and stars. Some were mysterious, and understood only by the Queen herself, or some of her favourite ladies, and were expressed in Spanish, Italian, Latin, French, and other languages. A few were as follow :- A bright flame, with the words, "Mas ardor que lumbre," i. e. "more heat than light."

Endymion had with his own hands painted this and several other devices on the pane. His mistress feigned not to understand that the concenied meaning was — "I have more love than I dare show."

Another presented a fire casting up numerous spacies towards a sky filled with stars, and beneath. "por cada estrella, sà cintilla,"—"for each star its ray;"— an ambiguous motto, which might mean to illustrate the vain attempts of mere spacks to reach the stars.

A rose-bud appeared in silver, with this motto:— "Quando si mostra men' tant' è più bella."

A phoenix, burning in the sun's rays, and the scroll "Qui mi da la morte mi da la vita."

A sky filled with stars, and one conspicuous above the rest with the words, "Entre todos querida."

A sun in its meridian, the motto, " Piu ardente quando piu eminente."

Many of the cavaliers of the day were suspected of having supplied the artist with different compliments and gallant ideas, and the mystery attached to these infinitely enhanced their value in the eyes of the fair travellers.

After this splendid litter, which was drawn by numerous horses, all gay and gorgeous with trappings, followed others filled with magnificently attired ladies: between them rode by tens, attended by their gouvernantes, the young maids of honour of Marguerite, on white palfreys with silver housings.

A long train of cavaliers mounted on superb chargers, some wearing brilliant armour, and others gay dresses of peace, came glittering along with the King of Navarre and the Duke of Anjou, both carefully surrounded by chosen friends of Catherine, who were, in fact, no other than their guards, although they thus appeared at liberty. The other royal princes of the houses of Lorraine and Guise made an equally splendid figure, and the whole scene was gay and imposing beyond description.

This gorgeous company was met by the anxiously expected monarch Henry the Third, who appeared in far different guise with his worn and jaded band of friends and soldiers; for he had no sooner heard of the death of his brother, than aware of the attempts which would be made by his Polish subjects to detain him, he had abruptly quitted Cracow in the night in disguise, and, attended but by a few gentlemen, had ridden post from town to town, allowing himself scarcely resting time till he reached the frontiers of France, and he now made his ap-

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and to take this jour till aimest a few boars of an impaisance to hall our ar waiting his voture to Paris; have been constrained to vomain!

and otherwise have joined us. It also me cloud the joy of this me are stall be nothing in future but smi

The cloud man the King's how contraler book, and she left that she had a ditask to talk in informing him of the trook she situals not, resolved to early her pouniting him to a princess of her own choice had informed herself of the impression. pearance, bringing with him none of the same splendour of which he was so fond.

His arrival, however, was hailed by his friends with enthusiasm, and as every care had been taken by his politic mother to secure his good reception, he had no reason to complain of his welcome.

Almost his first question was news of Marie de Condé, and he could not conceal his chagrin on being informed that she was detained in Normandy by illness, and had been unable to accompany the Queen-mother on her expedition to meet him.

"We had not purposed to take this journey," said Catherine, "till almost a few hours before we set out, but our impatience to hail our King prevented our waiting his return to Paris; some therefore have been constrained to remain behind who would otherwise have joined us. Let not their absence cloud the joy of this meeting: there shall be nothing in future but smiles in France."

The cloud upon the King's brow contradicted her boast, and she felt that she had a difficult task to fulfil in informing him of the truth, but she shrank not, resolved to carry her point of uniting him to a princess of her own choice. She had informed herself of the impression which the extreme beauty of Louise de Lorraine had made on him when he visited her father's court on his way to Poland, and hoped that the admiration which he had openly expressed of the Princess would not pass away.

She was prepared for a burst of passionate guef, and had laid her plans accordingly, making up her mind to endure and to triumph over all. Nevertheless, though she was thus working for the aggrandisement of the family of Lorraine, there was one of them whose inflience she dreaded: and without whose removal her schemes would prove of no avail. She had long writhed beneath his power, and striven to escape from the thraldom of his dictation. In a late conference he had ventured to throv out hints that he was in possession of a secret which, if divulged, would greatly injure her reputation in France, already sufficiently canvassed; and she secretly resolved to rid herself at the first opportunity of an enemy so dangerous as the aspiring Cardinal de Lorraine, her ambitious foe.

He was, however, now of the party which had met to do honour to the King, and was treated by her with all that marked distinction, respect, and kindness with which she was in the habit of blinding her intended victims; and the Cardinal, elated with the honours showered upon him, beheld a future opening, by the near connection which he should hold with his sovereign, of dignity and power.

The inhabitants and governors of Lyons exerted themselves to the utmost to show their sense of the compliment conferred upon them by the sojourn of so many royal guests, and all their riches and magnificence were displayed in the succession of fêtes given to their disinguished visitors.

One of the most splendid abodes in this qulent city was fitted up as the temporary esidence of the Queens; and all that luxury and ingenuity could invent, or gold purchase, was heaped around them.

The chambers of the Queen of Navarre were in particular arranged with extraordinary taste; and some of the most costly productions of the looms of Lyons were displayed to attract her admiration. The walls were hung with velvet and satin of the richest fabric; and one private apartment was adorned with hangings formed of silk, covered with columns of silver stuff embroidered in high relief with gold cord: between each column was represented, in needlework of the most delicate description, a full-length figure of a monarch of France in gorgeous robes of

state, enriched with jewels and gold of enormous value. All the canopies and seats were of cloth of gold and silver, worked after a pattern from Persian designs, and representing scenes from the history and fable of that country.

For several weeks nothing was thought of but uninterrupted revelry, and the extraordinary splendour displayed in the dresses of all the royal and noble persons engaged exceed description. Henry the Third appeared to lose himself in the delight of these amusements, and the only shade that disturbed his felicity was the absence of his intended Queen, the unfortunate Marie.

His reigning favourite, Du Guast, was now to him all in all; and this artful courtier, having been bribed to do so by the Queen-mother, amused his attention by every means that he could invent in order to occupy him from thoughts which she dreaded should too often intrude: she had hinted to Du Guast that if Marie became the chief care of his royal master his power would soon end, and catching at once the idea of the importance of keeping them apart as long as possible, he seconded her views with all his ingenuity.

A visit to Avignon was arranged, and some of the party it was settled should go with the King

and Queen-mother, who desired to be present, and assist at a grand procession of penitents called Battus, into which fraternity the King, who affected extraordinary piety, desired to be admitted. The Cardinals of Lorraine and Armagnac accompanied them, and wondrous was the preparation, and ceaseless the din of bells announcing the solemn ceremony. With assumed humility the haughty Cardinal of Lorraine walked barefoot in the ranks of the holy pilgrims, his head uncovered, and bearing an enormous crucifix. The King, Queen-mother, and many of their train attended, and the parties were distinguished by their colours; the King's penitents being dressed in white, the Queen-mother's in black, and those of the Cardinal in blue. They had fasted that day, but after the fatigues of the long procession, and the almost interminable religious ceremony, it was deemed proper that some refreshment should recruit their exhausted strength.

Catherine's kindness was particularly marked towards the Cardinal of Lorraine, and on his complaining of excessive thirst, she with her own hands poured him out a draught of wine, which he drank to her health, accompanying the action with one of those gallant compliments for which he was more famed than for the piety which had that day edified the world.

That evening the Cardinal was taken very ill, the thirst of which he had complained increasing rather than diminishing, and so violent a fever came on that his attendants were alarmed; he uttered the most incoherent expressions, and used language so unfit for the mouth of so exalted a churchman that those around him shrank back appalled. His life was well known to have been profligate in the extreme, but the revelations he made in his ravings amazed those who knew him best. On his nephew the Bishop of Rheims being sent for, so far from expressing any sympathy, he uttered a jest which was retailed with laughter at the time.

"I see nothing in my uncle," said he to Queen Catherine, "which should make us despair of his recovery, for he retains all his accustomed habits, and expresses himself in his accustomed language."

The Cardinal died, and his sudden death was attributed to the fatigues which he had undergone, and the exposure to the weather in the procession which he had imprudently attended.

Notwithstanding this occurrence, the gor-

geous feasts and entertainments prepared for the King were continued; at length the parting fête was given which was to crown all by its magnificence. The Queen-mother had expressed a wish that that day her daughter, of whose beauty and extraordinary splendour and taste in dress she was peculiarly proud, should indulge the ladies of Lyons by appearing in her most gorgeous habiliments, together with all her ladies,—her own appearing according to her directions in garments exquisitely fashioned.

Marguerite, excited by the admiration which followed her wherever she appeared, and exhilarated by hopes that Henry of Navarre was not insensible to the charms which bewildered all others, exerted herself to please and dazzle and delight. She had recovered her former spirits; her wit, and grace, were the theme of every tongue, the attraction of every heart; and but that she regretted the absence of her beloved Marie, whose illness had been announced to her, she would have felt perfectly happy. However, she was sure that they should soon meet, and she had every reason to believe that she should before long hail her friend as a sister and as Queen of France.

The dress in which Marguerite appeared on the occasion of the memorable festin at Lyons is thus described by her eulogist Brantome. Her head was adorned with a great quantity of large pearls and precious stones, and above all diamonds of immense value, placed amidst her glossy hair in the form of stars, as though contending with heaven and its starry nights in splendour and radiance. Her graceful form of commanding height was arrayed in a robe so rich and heavy with its gorgeous ornaments, that none but one so majestic and perfectly made in all proportions could have ventured to appear in it, as it would have overpowered and crushed those of ordinary size or figure. The stuff which composed it had been a present from the Grand Signor to the Queen of Navarre. It was of cloth of gold covered with raised work of different tinted gold from its ground, and embroidered in borders with pearls and gems of every colour in flowers and leaves. The fringes were resplendent, and the whole costume such as surpassed in costliness anything that had ever been beheld before in France: it was thought "a chef-d'œuvre of art, and the quantity used for the robe was fifteen ells, each ell being worth a hundred crowns of gold." Her enthusiastic historian describes her manner as a happy mixture of dignity and softness, peculiar to herself, and unlike that of any other princess, however distinguished for beauty or for grace; her speech was grave, and yet full of sudden flashes of merriment which were quite irresistible, — her eloquence unapproachable, and her smile a paradise in itself. Henry of Navarre sat by her side, and he could not but acknowledge that she was fascinating and lovely in the extreme."

"But alas!" he said to himself, "she loves not me. Vanity is her idol,—homage is her desire, and to see a crowd of slaves at her footstool. I am nothing to her, except that she may not disdain to class me, from a momentary caprice, amongst her adorers, to be discarded like the rest when the transient preference is faded away. I wish she were less a coquette, or that I could disbelieve the stories of her idle vanities and deception. But how should the daughter of such a mother be otherwise than faulty? although, to do her justice, she has none of her worst qualities."

Thus he mused, and gazed, and philosophised, and admired, till his heart began to melt beneath the glory of her beauty's rays, and Marguerite thought no cloud could ever obscure the happiness of that enchanted time. The Queen-mother was seated near them at table, — mirth and wit were at the highest, —

restraint and ceremony were banished, and every one appeared free and at ease. Catherine, elated and joyous, was speaking gaily to the King, and amongst other topics talked of peace.

"We are now," she said, "secure of the continuance of that blessing; the lamented Cardinal de Lorraine is gone, who was said by common rumour to have been the only cause of its long delay; but that I cannot believe," she added, observing that her words were remarked by some at table who were gravely silent,—"I cannot credit it of so great and wise a prelate, whose every thought was for the good of France. Alas! both the country and we all have lost much in his death. He was,—" she went on in a low voice to the small circle round her, "one of the most unworthy and dangerous of men, and we are safe only now that he is in his grave."

As she spoke she took from the hand of her son a cup of wine which he presented to her.

"Let us," said he, smiling, "drink to the memory of the Cardinal, whose double character you give so well."

Catherine was about to raise the cup to her lips, when, on a sudden, sounded in her ears a sharp shrill cry which seemed to pierce her brain, and starting up with a gesture of horror, her hands trembling, and her face livid, she shrieked out as the cup fell from her grasp.

- "Jesu! the Cardinal de Lorraine!—see!—there—before me!" *
- "Mother!" cried Henry, "you dream—compose yourself—what image have you conjured up?"

Catherine gazed still upon some object invisible to all other eyes—followed it from arch to arch of the extensive pillared chamber, with dilated orbs and straining vision—then heaving a deep sigh, and shuddering violently, she sank back in her seat. The guests were alarmed and disordered—every one pressed round the Queen—exclamations, questions, entreaties overwhelmed her—with a great effort she recovered

* May not this scene, which is attested by many of the historians of the time, have suggested to Shakspeare that which it so closely resembles in Macbeth? The occurrences, real and imagined, in the life of the Queen-mother, were written and repeated without end; and in England, of course, at the period when the persecuted Protestants fled thither for protection, all the marvellous tales which could be collected were recorded and listened to with avidity. The remarkable vision of her successors, which Catherine is said to have had, might also furnish the great dramatist with the idea of that exhibited by the witches to the murderer of Banquo, for in many particulars it is the same.

herself, and looking up she said, crossing herself with much appearance of devotion,—

"Strange effect of imagination! Either I am greatly deceived, or I but this moment beheld that good man pass before me on his way to Paradise, to which blissful place of eternal joy methought I saw him mount as I gazed."

A chill passed through the assembly, and every one looked at his neighbour with fear and misgiving: all pleasure was at an end, for the attempts to restore it were forced, and did not answer. The King hastened to conclude the feast, and the guests, who had met so joyously, retired to their different homes, dispirited and amazed.

Meantime the Queen-mother, seeking her chamber, retired to her couch fainting and fevered: she would not part, as usual, with her ladies, but with convulsive starts exclaimed every now and then, closing her ears with her hands, and shutting her eyes,—

"Together!—that cry comes again—and he, too—he is still there! shall I never be able to banish him from my sight?"

All night she continued, at intervals, to be violently agitated; and at length her senses became altogether disordered. The King and Marguerite of Navarre were sent for, and found mer it is measured seemed suddenly to remen: see measure seemed suddenly to remen: see measure some and desired that every mer should reson, maring her alone with her son.

They remained repeties for some time, during waters Cartaneone revenies to him, as if she had not now received the intelligence, the sudden during a lines by the stock she had received.

"You know, my san," said she, "I am always warmed of all that happens to me, and at take to-day the vision which so disturbed me was invintious senture a sign of the affliction in store."

But Catherine speice to one insensible of her words. As soon as site began to tell him of the increased illness of Marie he became frightfully alarmed, and a presentiment of the truth flashed upon him. He listened to the imaginary details of her malariy with silent terror; and when the fatal truth reached him he sank senseless on the floor beside his mother's bed. She was far from having intended to let him know the event in this manner, but in the present state of her mind she was scarcely aware of what she had done; and no sooner had she related the fact which weighed upon her mind with fearful force than she relapsed into her ravings.

Marguerite, on hearing her cries, rushed back

to the chamber with her attendants, and the sight of her brother, prostrate and apparently lifeless, confounded her with terror.

The King was borne away, and every effort used to restore animation to him, for a long time in vain. For three days he remained immoveable and silent, except by occasional groans, and it was feared his reason had altogether given way. At the end of this time the Duke de Guise, and some other of his friends visited him, and used every endeavour to cause his grief to take a form less dangerous;-they wept, they extolled the virtues of the lost princess, they dwelt on her graces, and recalled her savings and actions until at length their attempts produced the desired effect, and Henry burst into a flood of tears. This passion of grief continued so long, that new fears were entertained that he would become exhausted by its violence.

He refused all sustenance, and rejected every entreaty to consider his health. He never inquired for his mother during the whole period, and she remained in a state of mental and bodily suffering impossible to describe. At the end of a few days, when her fever subsided, she seemed to wake as from a dream, and desired to be carried into her son's chamber. This was in vain opposed; and, arrived there,

she appeared astonished to find he was aware of the calamity he had sustained.

"Who told the King of this?" she inquired feebly.

" It was your Grace, who yourself communicated it," was the reply.

Henry started from the ground, where he had cast himself. — "Mother," he cried, "unsay those fearful words! — Tell me they were but the ravings of your fever, and that my Marie still lives! I have been deceived all along,—you know so well how to deceive,— this time it shall be a virtue in you."

"Alas! Henry," replied Catherine, "I know not how I told you. I should never have found courage or power to relate the direful event, had I not been raving with fever. Oh! my son,— it is but too true!"

She was interrupted by a loud burst of laughter from Henry.

"Then we will make merry in honour of the event," he cried, wildly. "Let me have funereal robes prepared instantly,—let all the furniture of my houses,—my carriages,—my dresses, speak of her fate! Send," he continued, turning to one of the nobles round, "send straight, my dear Souvray, and have dresses made for me of all kinds, to the value of six

thousand crowns. I will give you the pattern, - let us set about it without loss of time;every aiguillette I wear shall be garnished with têtes-de-mort, - no other ornament will I have in embroidery, in jewels, in ribbons, - from my hat to my shoes all shall be covered with the signs of death. It will be brave! My mother will admire it-she is so fond of death: - ha! ha! - she shall invent for me:-let the poets write elegies, epitaphs on her,- I will read only those. Is Passerat with us? - Yes: bid him come to me, and we will talk of funereal subjects fit for his muse. This is as good as all the fêtes of Lyons,-nay, the best of all, for it shall last for ever !"

In this manner the unfortunate victim of Catherine's ambitious cruelty raved for weeks, and her tortured heart began to despair of his recovering the reason which had suddenly become obscured. It is possible that the

"delicate chain
Of thought, once tangled, never cleared again,"

for his subsequent conduct, his cruelties, vices and extravagant wickedness might well lead to the supposition.

He did, however, recover, to all appearance,

but only to put into execution the fancy which his madness had suggested. His books, furniture, dress,—all, as he had said, were covered with ensigns of death: he appeared in public, at different festivals given throughout his kingdom during the progress he made on his way to Rheims, where his coronation was to take place, adorned with these symbols in profusion; pendant by his side was a large rosary, all of death's-heads, and inscriptions and mournful trappings environed him on every side.

Notwithstanding all this, Catherine found, to her surprise, that he made no opposition to her express desire that he should form an alliance with Louise of Lorraine, and all preliminaries having been soon concluded, — for the Count de Vaudemont, her father, was too much flattered and delighted to oppose any obstacle to so unexpectedly advantageous a match,— the favourite, Du Gaust, was sent to fetch the bride, who met the royal party at Rheims; and, almost before she could recover from her amazement at the proposal, she found herself received as Queen of France.

Henry was so enraptured with the remarkable beauty of his young bride that he appeared suddenly to lose all remembrance of his

former passionate attachment; in excuse for his intemperate grief it was given out that he had been bewitched by an ear-ring and a cross: and with a frivolity and absurdity of which he gave many proofs in after-times, he occupied himself entirely with the preparations for the ceremony of the marriage and coronation, which were to take place together. It seemed a kind of transport with which he entered into the most minute details,-planned the dresses for himself, his bride, and his courtiers. Nothing could exceed the extravagant luxury of the arrangements; and so long did it take to dress the royal pair on the eventful day that they were not ready to hear mass till five o'clock in the evening; this gave much disgust to many, and was also looked upon as a bad omen, joined to the circumstance of the crown having twice fallen from the King's head during the ceremony, and on his replacing it the third time he complained of its giving him great pain. In the hurry and confusion, the master of the ceremonies had forgotten the custom of bestowing the kiss of peace, and when all was concluded, it was recollected too late that Te Deum had not been sung!

It was also remarkable that there appeared no joy on the countenances of the people;

curiosity alone seemed to have drawn them together, and the superb show was gazed and commented on without sympathy and without acclamation. The unbounded extravagance displayed on the occasion seemed to give offence, at a time when the treasury was wellknown to be nearly exhausted by the profusion of the Queen-mother and her favourites, for so many years, and the expensive wars carried on in so many quarters at the same time. The royal party, however, highly delighted with all this pomp and display, did not deign to bestow a thought upon the opinion of their subjects; and Catherine's well-known remark, "Il faut louer Dieu de tout, mais il faut vivre," was frequently repeated, and acted upon, the first part by hypocritical prayers, processions and pilgrimages, the last by grinding the faces of their devoted subjects, in order to wrest from them sums to be wasted in riotous living.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIGHT.

Abandon delay! — See, the whole assemblage of slender plants, pointing to the bower with fingers of young leaves agitated by the gale, make signals for thy departure. Songs of Jayadeva.

In Paris, during the absence of the Court, an event had occurred which filled men's minds with horror and amazement. The great cross of the Holy Chapel of the Palace had been stolen in the night-time, by, it was generally supposed, a band of Italian ruffians, whose unpunished crimes and constant depredations had excited the indignation of the Parisians ever since they first made their appearance at the time of the Nopces de Paris, as the massacre was sometimes termed.

Justice appeared to sleep, or, to awake only at the call of the great. A late execution had caused universal disgust and rage. Biragues, the Chancellor, and several Masters of the

THE PARTY OF THE P manus 1 mil die 1 mil im i Si. MANY MANY SERVICE IN COMMAND THE I IN SECTION DESCRIPTION OF STREET AND ADDRESS OF No dies de les de dieses suit l arter nun i France. Wast Tener im Mari accommon y is June, and all he than ATTENDED TO STATE WERE THE ME REAL & REAL PROPERTY AND ADDRESS OF STREET WHEN I SHE RUSSIAL & M. ARM D JULY OF SPREADER BOX TONE -- M S THE RESERVE WERE SHOWN I THE THE A CHARLES WITH ME AND A STREET, W. THE RESERVE AND ASSESSMENT ASSESS THE R TRUE IN AND

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this act, and it appeared clear to her that she had been betrayed.

Instead of performing any acts which should restore to him the lost affections of the people, Henry the Third gave himself up entirely to every species of dissipation which the depraved taste of the time could invent. His former talents, which had promised much, seemed entirely clouded; -he never attended to public affairs, but, leaving all to his mother and his ministers, who were at her disposal, spent whole days in devising new dresses for himself and his wife, of whom he seemed childishly fond, and who, having a mind entirely vacant, possessed no sort of power over him. He would cut out her robes, and sit by to see them fashioned, -would stand for hours performing the office of hairdresser to her and his effeminate courtiers, who all imitated his habits, till the Court became a scene of folly and disgusting levity, fit only to excite the contempt of the lowest of the people.

He was execrated and held in abhorrence by all his subjects; and on the escape of the Duke of Anjou, which was at length effected, so many flocked to his standard that Catherine began to see that she had carried her desire of sway too far in allowing Henry to become a more marie of some to the world, which she wasted to govern without a competitor. She have write wasted of the proposition of the renewal of the proposition of Engians, and resolved to oppose the waves of our wounger son, whom she never likes, by every masses in her power.

She thereing assumed a friendly appearance towards the captive king of Navarre, and determined so to cajole and blind him that he should imagine his interests were better takes care of by his remaining than by flying to join the armies of his brother-in-law. She, however, dreaded the influence and the clear-sightedness of Marguerite, and renewed her plans to keep them from any union of sentiment; - she saw Navarre's weakness with respect to beauty. and she was constantly introducing to his notice some new and fascinating person, who for a time was tutored to attract his attention from the wife of whom he had lately shown himself too fond. The grief of Marguerite for the loss of her friend, the Princess de Condé, knew no bounds, and the tenderness of her amiable husband's nature, which could never endure the sight of female sorrow, led him to offer her every consolation which sympathy could imagine; thus poor Marguerite in all her grief

had a happiness which she had scarcely hoped for, and the transient nature of which she did not then dream of. But Henry of Navarre, in the midst of all this apparent ease and carelessness, was nursing the great projects which he afterwards executed, and planning schemes for the relief of his oppressed country, which he felt his flight could alone forward.

Du Guast, the still reigning favourite of Henry the Third, had conceived a passion for Mademoiselle de Torigni, the beloved companion of Marguerite, but had been repulsed with disdain by that high-minded lady on venturing to declare his admiration. A feeling of bitter hatred had ever since taken possession of his heart, and he watched the opportunity of injuring both her and her mistress by every possible means. The first was to inspire suspicions in her husband's mind of the nature of Marguerite's regard for Endymion, and induce him to think that her imprudent penchant for the interesting page was encouraged by La Torigni. He imparted his views to his master, who, glad of any new plot which promised excitement, and being entirely estranged from his sister, who was disgusted with his levity and want of feeling, readily consented to any proposal he made.

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at her Heav at Navarre would not him s are representative visits resided to data ne muse a Namunia, dus as desgré de tal was so maked and that he fall into the next and with the principle on the pius. He was manify took the alors, at an more recommend has resolution to retail net by bear at he may: much decemb same, a want Marparite, indignat at the supreme si ne materi. Int her temperal me remains and a marrie and colliners cosuc what summer then more than ere. states to the grad at this accurrence was the ne a ne may manadisi be her broke n sunt La Tungea, without her of time, to a restaur of the own in Asjon, and dismit Sourcement from that surveys. Teams, reproaches, season, maigranter were of no avail; and Noware became armed the him of the typeser to what he had given a sunction by his interference a die des maines.

La Tangai, annuloi by the broken-heartel Emigration, was despetched to the domain of her cousin, the Baron de Chastelas, and in his secluded abode wept her separation from her beloved mistress. Her cousin consoled and treated her with the most affectionate attention, and bade her look forward to happier times and a restoration of happiness; but for poor Endymion there appeared no prospect but eternal parting; and he lingered on in an existence of regret and unavailing sorrow.

In order to lull the suspicions of Henry of Navarre, and to keep him a contented prisoner at large, it had been announced to him that the lieutenancy of the kingdom was to be conferred on him in the course of a very short time; and so well did he play his part, that the King and Queen-mother believed him to be entirely deceived, and their dupe in every particular.

Navarre had been suffering from an attack of ague, and one night lay silent in his bed, while D'Armagnac and D'Aubigné, his two faithful friends, watched beside him. They were mute, thinking he slept, when suddenly they heard deep sighs, and heard him uttering, in a low and mournful voice, parts of verses from the eighty-eighth psalm,—

"'Oh, Lord!"' he whispered, "'My soul is full of trouble.—I am counted as one of them that go down to the pit: and I have been

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Duke d'Anjou commands the men who defended you in your cradle. Why should they fight beneath the banner of a Catholic? Why are you a slave here rather than their leader,instead of leaving your cause in his hands? Those who executed the massacre of St. Bartholomew know well that their victims will find avengers. You might be glorious, and you stay here to be trampled on! As for myself and my companion here, wearied with your long and ignoble patience, we were concerting measures of escape for to-morrow, when your sighs interrupted us. When we are gone, the only faithful friends left near you, who will prevent the poisons of the Queen-mother from being employed? Do you doubt her will or her power to sacrifice you by this means, as she has already done by those you deplore? You are a marked victim, - stay here and die the death of a dog; fly with us, - and be the hero of a great nation!"

Henry started up, his pale cheek crimsoned with shame and indignation.

"Am I then so much despised by those I love? This must not be. But you are right, my delay has been too long, and shall be put an end to. We will fly, my friends,—and this," said he, smiling, "shall be the last time we will

A sentent reminer was then agreed upon the desiration of reservoir to relamping the enterprise of reservoir and the set eternal of reminer with water executive and to be at eternal services with water executive for purpose.

Several relicers insit of last been diagrasted with the manner in which places had been given by the filing to his worthless favourities, and their cause. So considers had the court become of Newsco's content, and of his persuasion that the lieutenancy of the kingdom would be soon his, that no objection was made to his extending his hunting excursions as far as St. Germain. This, therefore, gave him an excellent chance, and he resolved not to lose it this time, as he had done before, for want of presention.

The day on which they had decided for the

flight of the King of Navarre, he went early in the morning to the chamber of the Duke de Guise, with whom he was on very intimate terms; and, finding him not risen, sat beside his bed, and began to converse in the most familiar manner on his future prospects. He dwelt largely on the delight he felt at his approaching promotion, and boasted without restraint of the great actions he would perform, with such an appearance of frankness and vanity that De Guise was completely deceived. He had scarcely quitted him when the Duke, knowing that to turn Henry of Navarre into ridicule was just a pastime to delight the King, hastened to dress himself and pay him a visit, and divert him with a recapitulation of the conceit and credulity of his captive.

Great merriment was excited at the King's levée when De Guise's comic description was heard. The foppish and effeminate minions of their degraded master were overcome with laughter and excitement. King Henry uttered a thousand bitter and cutting remarks, all of which were applauded and admired.

"Poor, vain fool!" cried Henry. "It was our purpose to have curtailed him of his amusement, and have confined the bounds of his hunting,—but it is useless: let him follow his hounds and fly his hawks, he will never seek game beyond it. He is an idiot, whom the fair face of a woman can seduce from any purpose, and the fair words of a man deceive into any belief."

Meantime the object of their scorn had set out on the hunting party which they had planned; some of his friends remained behind to observe events, and give notice of danger. In the evening, D'Aubigné, who had attended the King's couchée, was struck by observing that Fervaques, one of the discontented lords who had offered to join the party, was busily engaged in conversation with the King. were so earnest in discourse, that they did not perceive his entrance nor his exit. His suspicions were excited; and resolving to know the worst, he posted himself outside the gate of the palace till Fervaques issued forth. did so, he found himself suddenly caught by the arm, and a voice thundered in his ear, -"Wretch, have you betrayed us?"

Fervaques was too much taken by surprise to deny the truth, and confessed at once that he had been seduced by the recollection of the former kindnesses of Henry the Third. "Go," he said, "you who are faithful to your master—go and save him—there is yet time!"

D'Aubigné lost no time in going to the King of Navarre's stables, where, in expectation of the necessity of their being suddenly required, the equerries had for some time kept their horses in breath by galloping them in a covered course. While they were getting them ready, the Prévôt des Marchands passed, for whom the King had sent with an intention of charging him to guard well the city gates, and suffer no one to go out; but before the order could be executed the equerries had got out of the town, and proceeded at full speed to Senlis.

The King of Navarre returning from the chace, which he had pursued from break of day, and seeing his horses in the suburbs of the town of Senlis, where they were resting, inquired what was the matter, for as yet he had arranged no regular plan of action, and had not contemplated so early a departure.

"Sire," answered D'Aubigné, "Fervaques is a traitor, and our whole design is betrayed by him to the King; he has confessed—not a moment is to be lost; death and shame lie in the road to Paris, elsewhere life and glory await you. Fly to Sedan or Alençon; either will afford you refuge for the present. The moment is come to give you to your faithful friends, who anxiously await your arrival amongst them."

"Fewer motives would suffice, D'Aubigné," said the Prince, shaking his hand, "let us set forth."

"The two guards must be despatched," said one of his friends; "there is no other way."

"On no account," replied Henry; "I would not cause their death for all the good I may gain. No, I have a better plan; send St. Martin hither forthwith, and see if we cannot gain our point by a little ready wit."

The guard was accordingly summoned.

"St. Martin," said Henry, "I am just informed that certain of my enemies in Paris have reported falsely of me to the King, accusing me of an intention to join the Duke d'Anjou. To you I confide the task of undeceiving his Majesty. Go, I entreat, instantly, and request to know whether it is his will that I return to Court to refute the calumny, or continue my hunting here."

St. Martin, much flattered and entirely unsuspicious, set out as he was ordered, and Henry gave out that he should pass the night at Senlis, awaiting the answer of the King.

A troop of players passing through Senlis, he had ordered them to represent one of their pieces, and repaired to the temporary theatre to witness the performance. With every appearance of interest he listened and looked on, while one of those farces were acted which were then beginning to succeed the religious dramas of the monasteries.

The plot of this piece was simple enough, but not without point, and the actors played with much spirit and humour.

A Parisian and his wife were discovered in the opening scene quarrelling violently, the fair one reproaching her husband with frequenting the cabaret, while, during his absence, bailiffs are constantly coming to seize her furniture in order to pay the King's taxes. She insists that the King is their ruin, for all their goods go to satisfy his exorbitant demands. The husband argues that she has given the best of all possible reasons that he should squander his money, " for what avails it," he contends, " to hoard that which is sure to fall into the clutches of this beau roi. Now you put it in that light," he continues, " instead of drinking wine at three sous the bottle I'll take care and get that at six." This impertinence arouses the anger of the wife anew; in the midst of her fury arrive a councillor of the court, a commissary, and sergeant, all claiming their respective dues: as there is nothing to pay them, their remaining furniture is to be taken.

Then begins a dialogue in which all the saint of the piece is contained, "Who are you?" demands the husband. "We are officers of jutice," they reply. This gives occasion for much abuse, and some severe hits at the manner in which justice is administered; and after having clearly demonstrated the real nature of justice, the argumentative Parisian proves that they have no right to the title they have arrogated of "officers of justice."

During this debate the wife, seeing that their intention is to seize her linen and clothes, seats herself firmly on the coffer which contains them. The commissary, in the name of the King, commands her to rise: she obeys—the lid of the coffer is lifted up, and to the great delight and astonishment of the spectators out issue three devils, who take immediate possession of the three officers of the law, and so the piece ends.

All the allusions to the King's extravagance, and every sharp rebuke contained in the dialogue, were applauded rapturously by the audience, who were entirely occupied by the scene. Henry, who had watched his opportunity, now summoned the second of the guards appointed to attend him, and feigning to have

recollected suddenly that the King was to leave Paris for Beauvais Nangi, he entreated him to set out immediately by another road in order to meet King Henry, whom he feared St. Martin would miss.

Both these spies being thus removed, Henry quitted the theatre unobserved, and, collecting those of his followers on whom he could most rely, they mounted their horses and began their journey: the night was very cold and dark, and they were obliged to take a devious course to arrive at Alençon without attracting suspicion.

On the evening of the next day, as they were entering a village, they were joined by a portly man well mounted, of whom they asked their way. He replied, with rather suspicious looks at the party, that they were in the right road—"I advise you to ride fast," said he, "and you may reach Alençon before night has closed in. What with one party and another scouring the country, there is little peace or rest in any town or village."

"This seems a snug little place," observed D'Aubigné, who to prevent suspicion pretended to wish to make a halt, though in reality they were impatient to get rid of their new companion, and to pass through all villages as quickly

as possible; "if there is any respectable massion hereabouts, perhaps we could find accommodation for the night."

"Oh, no—no," answered the stranger briskly, "it is one of the worst places possible; all wretched hovels, and as for a gentleman's house there is not one within two leagues."

"Why," said Henry, who had recognized in the speaker an old acquaintance, and felt sure that he had good reasons for representing the case in the most convenient way for his own interest, "yonder is a pleasant château, where there must needs be good cheer, for I see smoke issuing out of the chimneys. This cold night it were folly to pass by such an opportunity. I propose that we all ride thither, and claim the hospitality of the host."

His friends were not a little surprised at this proposition, so contrary to all prudence; they whispered their advice, and asked his meaning.

"I have no such intention, said he, laughing, and speaking in the same key, "but this is old Nantouillet, whom we treated once so scurvily in Paris. It is so good a jest to frighten him a little that I cannot resist it; and he shall serve our purpose, also, never fear."

"Whose domicile is this that we are approaching?" he resumed to Nantouillet, for it

was indeed no other, returning to his supper after a long day's ride, and hastening home to enjoy his warm chamber and repose, when he fell in with the fugitives.

"Where?" asked the ex-Prévôt, with a vacant air: "I see no house."

"How?" cried Henry, "not see yonder turretted mansion with its long pointed roofs? Why, man, the fire in the kitchen shines in your eyes at this moment."

"Oh, that!" returned Nantouillet, "how should I know? I am not of these parts, and not at all inquisitive. I take my own course, and never trouble other people with questions and inquiries about what is no concern of mine."

"Well, then," said Henry, "as you are going our way you may as well be our guide to Chateauneuf; perhaps, after all, it will be as well to ride on, and we shall not be sorry to have another added to our party. How fortunate that we met with you; come, you shall ride in the centre and be our director. It is rather provoking, though, to leave that good smoking supper yonder. I wager that the greedy old fellow of a citizen who lives there is just sitting down to his soup with great glee; I wish we had it instead of him."

"I weak is mut it!" grouned the Prévot inwardy: "mut it I minimized the fact these comments will all as home with me, and matter termseives at me for a month, perhaps, —mut there ? Clarico, much two pretty to be in their company: I mut make them quite out, but I suspect they are some of the rufflers of the army. I wish I could escape from them it is biting with: and to be compelled to go so far out of one's way, with a good hot comfortable supper all ready—is enough to make a saint swear."

"Have you ever been in Paris, good sir?" asked Henry, who enjoyed the evident dilemma of his old friend.

"Paris!" replied he, "I have, indeed, and hope never to see it again. It is a fitting place only for thieves and villains."

"But the Court," persevered Henry, "tell us something of the Court; we are all country bred. They say the Court gentry are worth knowing."

"You talk like one who knows them not," answered Nantouillet; "I have seen a great deal too much of their tricks, and I tell you there's not an honest man amongst them all. First, the King that now is, Henry the Third, he is a barber and perfumer—nothing more,

except you add a canting monk spoiled; his brother, Anjou, is escaped at last I am glad to hear—he was the best, but bad enough; and as for young Navarre—"

"Ay, what of him?" asked D'Aubigné, enjoying the joke.

"Why, he's a greater scapegrace than any of them in my mind, and a diable à quatre for a pretty face, — perhaps you'll say that is no great crime; but his fault is that he has not a grain of spirit, except to get into street disturbances, and riots, and pillages; which a gentleman and a prince should be ashamed of. He promised better once; but he is to be bribed, they say, with the lieutenancy of the kingdom; and is content to lick the dust. I have no patience with him."

"What can he do?" said Henry quietly.

"Do!" said Nantouillet, — "fight his way through them all, as his father used: he would not have been mewed up thus, like a sick hawk, while there was game in the field. But the Queen-mother ties him to her by means of her petite bande. He had better look after his own wife, than think so much of other men's."

"Why, what have you to say against the young Queen?" asked Henry, — "no harm I hope."

"No good." returned the Prévôt; "aid she is quite right to annue herself with all he gallants since her husband neglects her; they say she changes her lovers as she does her robes, every day. She is a lovely creature, and were she not her mother's daughter night have been fit for something."

In this kind of talk they rode on some miles; and when they arrived at Chatenuneuf under his guidance, they passed before the gates, which were shut. On demanding admittance, it was at once refused; when d'Aubigné rode up to the officer on duty and spoke to him privately.

Meantime Henry turned to the Prévôt. "Well, Nantouillet," said he, "I thank you heartily, not only for the good guidance we owe you, but for your entertaining and very just opinion of those of the Court."

"How! do you then know me?" said the Prévôt in alarm: — "what, and who are you? if robbers I am able to defend myself, though against odds, and you may chance to repeat having led me so far from home."

"It was a sorry trick, Prévot," resumed Henry, "to deny us hospitality; we are more generous, and shall make you our guest tonight whether you will or no. You shall sup with us at Chateauneuf; methinks you like the town better than the lady."

"Ha!" cried Nantouillet, "who are you, young gallant, who know me so well? by your Gascon accent you should be one of Navarre's followers."

Here his conjectures were interrupted by a loud shout, and a cry of "Open the gates to Henry King of Navarre!" which echoed from mouth to mouth; and, to his inexpressible consternation, the companion of Nantouillet, spurring his horse, and casting the mantle from his shoulders, which had entirely covered his figure, rode foremost into the town, cap in hand, disclosing the features of Henry of Navarre.

The Prévôt, amidst the laughter and jeers of the party which followed, was made to enter with them, and share the triumph of the citizens, who hailed the fulfilment of their best hopes, and with enthusiastic greetings welcomed the Prince to their walls.

A merry supper succeeded, which Henry resolved to render so agreeable that Nantouillet should have no cause to lament that which they had caused him to lose; and when they parted next day, it was with protestations of mutual forgiveness and friendship.

"Keep this ring, good Prévôt, for my sake,"

said Henry; "the Béarnois is poor now, but the day may come when he may have the power of naming a Prévôt of Paris; and none but Nantouillet shall be the man. The next time you give me a fête, depend on it I will order myself and my comrades more seemly, and your hospitality shall not be rewarded by riot and ill usage."

"Your Grace," cried the Prévôt, "may break every piece of furniture I have, then. I should not care if I made a bonfire of all my goods, so I could once see Henry of Navarre on the throne of France!"

"Treason! treason! good Prévôt," laughed Henry; "but I take your words as a good omen,—the stars may yet be propitious; and we may all meet again in more prosperous circumstances."

So saying, they parted. Nantouillet returned to his abandoned château, where he was well scolded by old Marion, whose cookery had been lavished in vain; and Henry of Navarre and his followers arrived safely at Alençon out of the reach of his enemies.

CHAPTER XL

COURTLY MANNERS.

We are shame-proof,

* * * *

The King and his company.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Henry the Third found that the King of Navarre had escaped in spite of all his vigilance, and that instead of deceiving he was himself deceived, he became almost frantic with rage.

"Marguerite is the traitress, the cause of all," cried he; "and I will make her repent it. She it was, I am convinced, who connived at my brother's flight, and now she has plotted for her husband. Fool that she is! I have taken good care that they shall have no happiness together. He would scarcely believe my accounts of her other lovers, but Bussy d'Amboise he is positively jealous of; and nothing will convince

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ence of a God in a manner not to be contro-

"I am glad your Majesty thinks so," replied the coxcomb monk, who was perfectly aware of the hypocrisy of his master, and could not restrain the jest which rose to his lips, "but if it would give you pleasure I am ready, at any time, to prove, with equally good arguments, that all I said yesterday was false, and will engage to send away my congregation quite as much convinced on the other side of the question."

" Silence!" said Henry, whose cue it was to be extremely pious that morning, "do not disturb my serious thoughts by your frivolity; - to-night, my dear friends," he continued, turning to the band of gentlemen who surrounded him, and who were variously employed in different feminine occupations; one embroidering, another winding silk, and some stringing beads; "to-night we will have a few pleasant hours; first, the penitential procession by torch-light,-the music, I hear, is to be divine; it would have a good effect if some of you would administer to yourselves the discipline as we go along; the ignorant brutes of people have an idea that we are not religious -which the saints forbid should be true. I have endered some large crosses of light wood, one of which I shall carry myself; and my great runnry of titus-de-mort will, I think, tell. I must get money from these niggards by some means, and piety. I think, answers best. After the last procession I filled my coffers pretty well; and as De Joyeuse's wedding will cost me a round sum, some great effort must be made."

- "I have ornamented these sandals with death's-heads, for your Majesty," replied Masgiron, who was busy with leather and ribbons; "you can walk barefooted in these admirably, without the skin of your delicate feet suffering. I shall paint a few drops of blood on the flesh-coloured stockings, which will produce much sympathy."
- "The balconies will be full of heads tonight," said Quelus: " and we are well provided with dragees musquées to cast at the fair devotees who will be praying at their casements for the holy penitents. Your Majesty's whip will be the great attraction, methinks, on this occasion."
- "Yes,—it is large and long, and shall hang conspicuously at my girdle," said Henry, laughing: "if it were not for the scandal that would ensue, what glorious delight it would be, in

the midst of the procession, to turn upon the lazy monks and give them a taste of what real flogging is."

"Let us do it, sire,—let us do it!" cried twenty voices.

"Hold, madmen!" cried the Petit Feuillant, throwing himself into an attitude, "would you insult holy Mother Church? would you give a handle to the heretics to call us heathens?—do not think of such a thing. Why, the very last time we all walked in the procession of the Confrères Penitens, do you not recollect the distich which the insolents made on us, because we were caught in that furious rain which wetted us to the skin?"

"Repeat it — repeat it!" cried the King, who cared not for abuse which he never intended should cause his amendment.

"This was the quatrain, may it please your Grace," replied Montgaillard,

"Aprés avoir pillé la France
Et tout le peuple despouillé
N'est-ce pas belle pénitence,
De se couvrir d'un sac mouillé?"

"Excellent!" cried Henry. "I wish it were true, but it is not so easy to despoil my loving subjects. I shall however do my best, for in spite of all the abuse directed against us, I find the processions impose on the people better than any other religious profession of fervour. By the bye, I forgot to enlarge Poncet the monk who insulted me the other day at Notre Dame, — I only meant to frighten him a little; perhaps his punishment might have been greater but for the rebuff he gave to d'Epernon. He must positively be rewarded for his wit. Tell De Joyeuse, who has not heard the jest, how it happened." The King leant back in his seat languidly, while one of his courtiers supported his feet in his lap, and Montgaillard related the story as he was commanded.

"Poncet, who calls himself an honest man, and is a fool to think honesty good policy, stands up in the pulpit at Notre Dame, and harangues his congregation on the wickedness and inutility of our processions, calling us a brother-hood of atheists and hypocrites; disagreeable words to hear! After considerable abuse, he goes on to say, 'I am credibly informed that last evening when their procession was finished, the spit turned without ceasing to provide supper for these gros pénitens. Fat capons were devoured by these fasters, and every sort of riot and confusion ensued, assisted as they were by sisters who had need to be penitent for their

sins. Cursed, wretched hypocrites! mocking God in a mask, and wearing whips at your girdles to deceive, the devil will use them on your backs some day! Oh! your backs and shoulders shall be well grilled and striped, and crackle in the fire. Par Dieu! there is not one of you that has not well deserved it!"

All the courtiers and the King himself were convulsed with laughter as the Petit Feuillant acted this. "And hear," he continued, "the kindness of the King. He had Poncet dragged from the pulpit, and thrust into his coche by the guard, who threatened to throw him in the river, while the audience laughed and shouted; he was carried to the Abbey de St. Pierre at Melun, and there shut up and made to eat on fast days,-this is his Majesty's only vengeance. But D'Epernon going to him said, 'Well, reverend sir, we hear your sermons make people laugh, and as we are all merrily disposed, should like to hear them in their proper place; nevertheless I must tell you, that a preacher like you should preach to edify and not to amuse.' 'Know,' answered Poncet, perfectly unmoved, 'that I preach the word of God, and whoever laughs to hear me are wicked men, and atheists. Nevertheless, I have never in my life caused so many to laugh as you have to weep."

D' Epernon retired quite crest-fallen, and Poncet remained a prisoner but victor.

"I had a strange dream last night," suddenly exclaimed the King, starting up and changing the subject. "I thought all my lions and bears which I keep to be baited, suddenly set upon me, and the dogs as well tore and worried me to death. I cannot bear the recollection of this, and will be revenged on those brutes who caused me such terror. Chomberg, give orders that on our return to-night the beasts are driven into one cage, and let our arquebuses be prepared, we will all fire upon them; it will make a glorious massacre, almost equal to St. Bartholomew!"

A shudder ran through the group, but no opposition was made to the inhuman order. St. Luc and Joyeuse whispered to each other, "The meaning of the dream is not difficult to interpret: he is eaten and torn to pieces by his vices, he carries things too far; is all prepared for our scheme of reform? we must positively get Du Guast, and some of the rest away from him, or the respectability of the court is at an end!"

Thus thought the two new favourites, whose morals were not a shade better than those they succeeded, but who were disgusted with the

weakness and cowardice displayed by many of the mignons who surrounded Henry, as, if they had any virtue, it might be bravery, of which they had given several striking proofs; and De Joyeuse, though the most expensive, yet was perhaps the least profligate of the worthless set who encouraged and fostered their master's weak and wicked habits.

At this moment D'Epernon was announced, bringing with him the Chevalier de Sure, grand Prior of Champagne, whom the King had desired to see.

"Oh, ho! Prior," cried Henry, without ceremony, "you are come, are you? how dare you attack my Intendant of Finance in the way you did lately.

"May it please your Grace," said De Sure, boldly, "I spoke the truth, and had no intention of offering insult to you. I said, and I maintain it, that Milon has cheated the people who had consented to pay your Grace's debts. He represented that they amounted to the enormous sum of eight millions, and has taxed and distressed your subjects to obtain that money, knowing that the true amount is but five millions of crowns; your Majesty knows it is so."

"What should I know of such paltry distinctions?" said Henry, scornfully. "It is not so, sire," replied De Sure, "it is a heavy burden on the people, who murmur loudly. I told Milon he was a villain, and fleeced the subjects of the King; I called him an assassin, and I gave him but his proper name. Place your hand on your heart, sire, and answer if I spoke not the truth."

Fire flashed from Henry's eyes; he started up, overturning Maugiron and D'O, who sat at his feet.

"Slave! insolent ruffian!" cried he, "do you give me the lie?" and darting at De Sure, he gave him several furious cuffs in the face, and began kicking him with the rage of a boy entirely ungoverned in his passion.

"Sire, for the love of Heaven," cried D'Epernon and De Joyeuse, "consider your station, your position; the Prior may be in fault, but is this becoming punishment for a great prince to inflict? Calm yourself, De Sure; depart instantly—stop not to parley. His Majesty will think better of this."

De Sure retired without loss of time, and the King sank exhausted with his exertions on a sofa, closing his eyes, and looking faint and overcome. Presently he raised his head, and appearing to recover himself, said,—

"You did right, De Joyeuse, to prevent my killing the insolent wretch; but he is an obstinate fool. Of course, I gave Milon my orders to call the five, eight; how else shall I furnish the expenses of your marriage with my wife's sister? Why will these idiots interfere with what does not concern them? Montgaillard, give me a lay; let us forget all these state affairs; D'O, hand him the lute,—something gay I intreat."

The monk touched the lute with a practised hand; and, throwing back his robe gracefully, and turning up his eyes with an affected air, sang the following villanelle:—

IN PRAISE OF INCONSTANCY.

I am not false, but if I were All nature is as false as I— Each object in earth, sea, or air, Exists but in inconstancy.

The gentle moon, that lovers hail,

To whom they mourn, and plead, and sigh,
Changes her features fair and frail,

A bye-word of inconstancy.

The breeze that through the garden roves
And woos each flow'r that blushes nigh,
Whisp'ring so fondly that he loves,
Is freighted with inconstancy.

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The wave that glitters to the shore, Kissing the leaves, and murm'ring by, Returns to those fair meads no more, But wanders in inconstancy.

'Tis true, in many star-like eyes, I 've studied passion's alchemy, But found, too soon, such lore supplies But lessons of inconstancy.

Sweet lady, then, reproach me not, Is she not false, can'st thou deny— Who makes all other loves forgot, And teaches man inconstancy!

After the song, Henry summoned to his presence a dwarf who had lately arrived from Nantes, and whose wonderful performances astonished the people of Paris. He was without arms, yet could perform feats of delicate dexterity, which others in possession of all their limbs found infinite difficulty in doing. could write, play at all games, draw the bow, load and fire a pistol, and perform various other wonders. His accomplishments were highly appreciated, and the King was so charmed, that he took off a heavy gold chain from his neck, and wrote an order on his exhausted treasury for a hundred crowns to be paid immediately to a person possessed of qualities so valuable and useful.

The effect which the flight of Henry of Navarre had on the mind of the Queen-mother was different from that which the King experienced. She had discovered that the extreme unpopularity of her reigning son was increasing to a fearful extent, and the means she had thought good to keep him from attending to state affairs had only rendered him odious, and herself a stranger to his counsels. He had lately treated her with positive neglect, and thwarted her frequently at the very moment when she thought him most occupied with his pleasures. She saw that the Duke de Guise was the people's idol, and she regretted not having entered the party of the Duke of Anjou and the King of Navarre, in order to have a hold upon the nation; for that she was detested there was no kind of doubt. She heard of the successes of her younger son, and the friendly terms on which Elizabeth of England received him: she saw the throne of her ungrateful but favourite child tottering, and she resolved on conciliatory measures. When she found that Marguerite had been harshly treated by her brother, she was very much annoyed, and visited her immediately, hoping to soften the exasperated feelings which she knew would be engendered against him. So desolately wretched was poor Marguerite that this show of kindness was

a comfort to her mind, and her tears flowed less painfully as she listened to her mother's jesuitical advice and consolation.

"Remember, my dear child," said she, "misfortunes never last long; all things in this world have two faces - one sad and painful, and the other more agreeable and pleasant; we have only to turn the medal, and with new events take new counsel. Let your brother see that he may be glad to make you useful to his purpose. Prudence, as you know, teaches us always to live with our friends as if they were one day to be our enemies, consequently we should never trust them beyond a certain point; but we should recollect, too, that our enemies may one day become our friends, and restrain our anger or our sorrow accordingly. I will undertake to impress this truth upon Henry, and, instead of this captive state, you shall soon live as your birth and station demand, and see the King at your feet intreating your good offices with your husband, whose power cannot fail to increase, for he will join Anjou and Condé, and I know not what the consequences may be."

Catherine repeated the same arguments to the King, who awakening from the lethargy of indolence, folly, and passion, into which he had allowed himself to sink, saw the necessity of once more putting himself under her guidance. He therefore changed his conduct to his sister, and expecting more from her than she had the power to afford, loaded her with caresses and honour, and endeavoured to make her forget his late unkindness.

But it was not this alteration which had restored the heart of Marguerite to repose, and had caused the tears to dry in her eyes, and the roses to revisit her cheeks; she had received from her husband a letter full of tenderness, penitence, and affectionate regret. He reproached himself with his harshness and cruelty in having consented to order her friend La Torigni to be sent from her, and recounted an event which had just occurred, which seemed to have given him extreme delight as he doubted not it would her.

The narrative which he related was as follows:-

"The poor, persecuted Gillone, who had no fault but loving you, was living in her cousin Chastelas's house, and my little rival, Endymion, whom I like extremely, was there also; ready to cause more scandal, if necessary, by his beaux yeux, without intending it. One night a party of mounted cavaliers arrived,

and announced their errand as from the King, who, they said, had been unable to resist the tears of his sister, and had resolved to restore her favourite lady to her society. They desired him to tell Gillone to prepare herself, as a palfrey was in waiting for her; but no sooner had he admitted the ruffians than they rushed to her chamber, seized the trembling girl and bound her hand and foot; then locking the door, left her till they had partaken of the good cheer which they had forced Chastelas to prepare for them. They drank to excess, and in their cups proclaimed that their intention was to carry La Torigni to Du Guast. who was waiting near, who had resolved with his own hands to drown her in the river. Chastelas, on hearing this, was in great terror and consternation, and supplied them with wine and food, hoping the good cheer would induce them to stay till daylight,—for it was a cold, damp night, - and that some succour might by that time arrive. Endymion, however, not trusting to that, had the presence of mind to let himself out by a back door, and, swimming the moat, for they had raised the drawbridge, ran as hard as he could in hopes of meeting some one to whom to tell the danger.

"It pleased God that La Ferté and Avan-

tigny, the chamberlains of your brother Francois, were riding along on their way to join him and the army, when they met Endymion in this breathless state. A few words explained the fact, and they resolved to do you a service; and, knowing you had nothing more at heart than the release of poor Gillone, set spurs to their horses, and, guided by your page, reached the château just as the brutal party were issuing forth with her in their arms, and, having tied her on a horse, were setting forth towards the river. Drawing their swords, Anjou's party rushed upon them, La Ferté calling out 'Hold, murdering villains that you are! - If you harm her you are dead men!' They then charged the villains, and having punished several of them severely, rescued your pretty friend from their grasp, whom they brought away half-dead with fear and joy, having scattered her enemies like the wind. She is now with D'Anjou and myself, for I arrived soon after this event: and I assure you is treated with the same respect and kindness as if it was La belle Marguerite in person. She has told me many secrets which I was so dull as never to guess, and I rejoice to find that my most dangerous rival is myself. Ah! little traitress! why have you always shown

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me such coolness, and allowed your pride to chill the affection I was ready to give you? I trust we shall not mistake each other again. You must hasten to us, if possible. I am obliged to go into Guienne as speedily as I can, and Anjou is about to depart on his love adventure to England."

This account was most welcome, and the young Queen determined that her spirits should not sink nor her courage fail her, trusting that she might not only be of use to her husband while she remained at Court, but be enabled to rejoin him before very long.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOVE-TREE.

I 've loved my last, and that love was my first!

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

QUEEN Elizabeth sat in a chamber of her palace at Greenwich, looking languidly on the sunset which illumined the waves of the river with gold and purple. Her thoughts were of the saddest kind: she was urged by her imaginary affection for the Duke of Anjou, to consent to the proposals made her by Simier, the nobleman whom he had sent to plead his cause; she was mortified at what he had disclosed to her of the Earl of Leicester's private marriage to the widow of the late Earl of Essex; she was annoyed at the opposition to her caprice shown by her Parliament, and her vanity was shocked at the home-truths delivered respecting her from the pulpit. It was true that the latter had been silenced by authority, but she felt that the general opinion, of

which, with all her pride, no one stood more in awe, was against her. Her subjects, who she always loved to believe considered her little less than a divinity, had dared to cavil at her decisions, to impugn her judgment, even to throw out hints that the maiden dignity, on which she prided herself, was giving way before a senseless attachment to a man twenty years her junior, a foreigner and a Catholic. She had been obliged to repress these insults with a strong hand, to imprison the Earl of Leicester, who had breathed threats of vengeance against Simier, and had opposed her council every time they met.

The wit, accomplishments, and flattery of Simier had completely gained the Queen's confidence: she abandoned herself entirely to the delightful visions his persuasive eloquence had conjured up. He represented the Prince as wasting away with a slow but sure disease,—the adoration he felt for the loveliest of her sex, and the dread of never being able to gain her affections. Day after day, hour after hour, did Elizabeth sit alone with the accomplished courtier, listening to his tales of enchantment, and dreaming herself into Arcadia. Sometimes during these interviews she allowed the great painter, Zucchero, to take a sitting for the por-

trait she was having painted after her own taste, and the destination of which she refused to name when intreated to do so by the insinuating friend of Anjou.

"Ah!" said he, "I dare not permit myself to imagine that any Prince in Christendom can be so fortunate as one day to possess this lovely shadow, for, should I do so, I must picture a calamity to one whom I dearly prize, love, and honour. Were that image presented to any but the Duke, my master, your Majesty had better, if you have any pity or feeling left in your bosom, prepare a bier for the unhappy object of your scorn; he would never survive it. And yet my hopes revive, and daring wishes take possession of my breast, when I reflect that you have deigned to accept the very dress in which you allow that happy man, who is permitted to gaze on your beauty for hours together, to attempt to delineate features whose brightness dazzles and deludes the ordinary beholder! Stav. madam!-let me intreat, turn your head a little more towards that snowy shoulder !- Now, Zucchero! is it not perfection ?"

The painter threw down his brushes in ecstasy.

"It is more than mortal!" cried he, in enthusiasm.—"I cannot paint if I am reminded of

what I gaze on !—Let me go on in a rapturous dream of oblivion, and I may succeed; but if I am shown that the lovely statue before me us breathe, and move, and smile, I am undow! That which is heavenly is beyond us;—the which, though heavenly-seeming, we are made to feel is mortal, we dare to covet, and our senses fail us!"

"My dear Lord!" exclaimed Elizabet,
"you will destroy my beloved painter; in
enthusiasm for his art knows no bounds; and
because I have some resemblance to a poetical
dream of beauty he has formed, he looks upon
me as his property, and is jealous of the admiration of others."

"Then, madam," replied Simier, "he must perish; for to repress the admiration you inspire were to stop the course of nature."

"Do you like the design of the picture?" asked the Queen, smiling, "it is my own; this Persian dress suits my figure well, and therefore I chose it rather than the dress of the day, which confines the form too much. You see how well he has depicted the golden embroidery all over the loose robe, — the border of jewels, do not they sparkle brightly? The pearls which cover the shoes in this graceful pattern are precise, he copies so exactly; look at the

ropes of pearl about my neck, and the bracelets on my arm; are they not lucid?"

"Exquisite!" said the courtier; "but the small, delicate foot, the white, little, tiny hand, covered with rings, and the snowy throat and bosom, over which the golden tresses play like threads drawn from the sun-beams! the graceful shape, the winning smile, yet it is pensive too—that gentle countenance and those radiant eyes are full of thought!"

"Do you observe," said the Queen, "that I am standing in a forest of flourishing trees; and, behold, on every bough are billing pairs of happy birds?"

"Happy! ah, you say well, enchantress!" whispered Simier, "would that your thought were not mere fancy!"

"And see, I rest my arm upon the neck of a fair hart, whom I have crowned with flowers. Does the allegory please you, my Lord?" added Elizabeth playfully.

"It will well please him who is deemed worthy by the goddess of those shades to unriddle it. Alas!" cried Simier, apparently rapt, "why is the success I have so striven for, the cause of pangs like these? My heart is too full, —pardon me, gracious, and too fatally fair Queen—" His words died away, and he ap-

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I will go home and gaze on her
etouch that miracle of art, and forget
which gold alone will pay."

when Zucchero was gone, it was time for the rafty courtier to recover himself; he accordingly did so; and, throwing himself at her feet, poured out a rhapsody, in which love, admiration, duty, wretchedness, and resignation appeared to be mixed. He clothed his apparently wild declaration in language most poetical,—made numerous classical allusions, and ending by entreating, first, to be pierced by her hand to the heart for his presumption, next, to be forgiven for the sake of his master.

Moved to tears by this successful acting the vain woman raised him from the ground, affected disdain, anger, pity, and compassion, as well as he could himself have done; and, after this fantastic display of feelings, which were never, with her, more than the mere semblance of reality, she dismissed him, well content with the scene, and excited by its novelty and apparent truth.

"Poor Simier!—he really loves me!" said she; "how dangerous an ambassador of love has the Prince chosen! Mary Stuart may boast her lovers; but was Chatelar, was Rizzio more enamoured than this unhappy man?"

When Simier reached his own apartments he cast himself upon a seat, and indulged in a long burst of suppressed laughter; he dared not disclose to any his real feelings, as the great end hung on a thread; and he dreaded that the very figures of the tapestry should report his thoughts.

"If Anjou arrive not," said he, "the farce will have a sudden ending; I can carry it no further: her egregious vanity makes her believe anything, though I feared I had gone too far. This untoward wind delays him strangely; he should be arrived by this. I think all promises well; she will doat on him, and may on me too, if she pleases; and we shall have store of gold to send to France, and make us forget our long privations."

He was interrupted by a stir without, and a page, rushing in, informed him that the expected arrival had taken place, — the Duke of Anjou was just landing. Simier lost no time in hurrying down to the shore to welcome the disguised Prince, who came in secret to visit his intended bride; and, tired of the long and changeful negociations, resolved to put himself out of suspense at once, and carry the Queen's consent by a coup de main.

Surprised, gratified, flattered and delighted, at this bold proceeding, Elizabeth, though at first she assumed coyness, ended by acknowledging the pleasure his presence gave her; and now, as if she had at once taken leave of all the prudence, wisdom, and policy which had distinguished her as eminent amongst the monarchs of Europe for so many years, she abandoned herself to the childish amusement of a new attachment, and, it appeared, acted it so well that her heart was actually entangled, and every day the web seemed growing stronger round the captive.

She had already given the Duke the sum of four hundred thousand crowns, in support of his pretensions to the sovereignty of Flanders, forgetting at the moment that in case of his success she should be involved in a war with the King of Spain; this, however, her council were not slow in reminding her of, and their representations, reproaches, and entreaties, dis-

tracted her. In the midst of the conference she burst into tears.

"I was, indeed, simple," said she, "to confide so delicate a matter to such counsellors. I vainly expected that, instead of this opposition, I should have met with petitions that I should marry. How often have I been importuned upon the subject!—and now that I have fixed upon one, in merit far beyond all the suitors who have aspired to please me, I am treated with indignity and refused consent, as if I were a child who asked for a toy!"

"Not so, your Majesty," replied Sadler;
your faithful subjects have long desired that
your fair hand should be bestowed on one worthy
of your exalted virtues, but we deemed not that
it could ever enter into your mind to choose a
Catholic. Consider the offence to God, if he
were permitted to have the mass celebrated on
our very hearth."

Elizabeth started, but her brow grew sterner as he went on. "Consider the age at which your Majesty is arrived, and the youth of him you honour with your regard; consider the probability of a young husband forgetting his duty to a wife so much his senior—"

" I will hear no more," she exclaimed imperiously; " you insult and torture, instead of

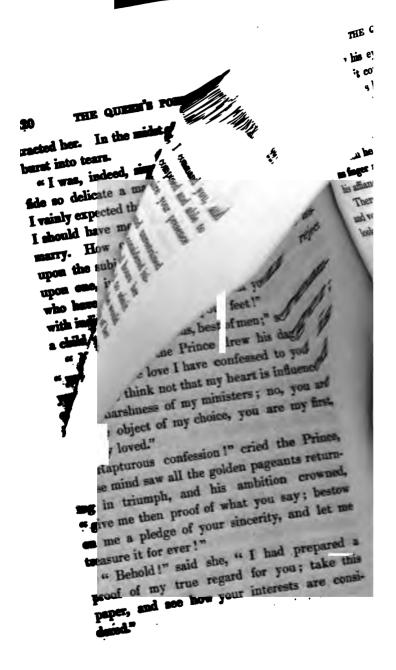
advising me. Depart, I command you, and when my mind is more composed and able to endure better, I will require your presence again."

Furious was her passion, and unrestrained her invectives, against those she considered inimical to her marriage; for several hours her anger was so great that she refused to admit any one, and feeling that in this state she would scarcely appear to advantage in the eyes of her lover, she declined seeing him till she had recovered some degree of calmness.

When her irritation was sufficiently subsided to make her emotion appear only becoming, she allowed Anjou to visit her, and permitted him to behold her in a negligent dishabille, her hair flowing about her shoulders, her tears streaming plenteously, and her whole appearance bespeaking despair and tender regret.

"Alas, François," she said, as he fell at her feet and clasped her hands, entreating to know the cause of her distress: "I am thwarted, shocked, insulted by my people, whose jealous attachment cannot brook resigning me to a husband. My own feelings I do not attempt to conceal from you, but I fear I must submit to the popular will."

" Say not so, adored and loveliest of thy



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But although, overpowered by the Queen's wehemence, her council had appeared to give their satending to all from intending to allow it to succeed.

Elizabeth, on retiring one night to her chamber, was assailed by the clamorous sorrow of her female attendants; all that could be thought

sex," exclaimed the Duke, trembling for all his plans of aggrandisement, as the thought flashed rapidly over his mind of the expectations her promises had raised in France; "consign me not to despair, pronounce not my doom. Did you then give me a glimpse of Paradise to cast me from the slender bridge that led to it, when I thought another step secured the glory and the beauty mine? I will not survive this misfortune! pronounce the word that you reject me, and behold a victim at your feet!"

"Hold! dear, generous, best of men;" screamed Elizabeth, as the Prince drew his dagger; "think not the love I have confessed to you is weakened; think not that my heart is influenced by the harshness of my ministers; no, you are still the object of my choice, you are my first, my only loved."

"Rapturous confession!" cried the Prince, whose mind saw all the golden pageants returning in triumph, and his ambition crowned, "give me then proof of what you say; bestow on me a pledge of your sincerity, and let me treasure it for ever!"

"Behold!" said she, "I had prepared a proof of my true regard for you; take this paper, and see how your interests are considered." He ran his eye hastily over the scroll, and found that it contained a promise to look upon his enemies as her own; to assist him in all his necessities, and not to treat with any power until she had first consulted with him.

She required him to give her a similar promise, to which he readily agreed: and then, placing on his finger a ring, she bade him consider her as his affianced wife.

There was no lack of protestations, flattery, and vows of attachment on his part, and he now looked upon his success as certain.

Elizabeth summoned the Bishops and the Lords, and required their signature to a paper regulating the rites to be observed on her marriage, which she announced should take place in a few weeks. Expresses were sent off to France and to the States; and the union, as if it had already taken place, was forthwith celebrated at Bruxelles with fireworks, discharges of artillery, and every demonstration of joy.

But, although, overpowered by the Queen's vehemence, her council had appeared to give their sanction to this measure, they were far from intending to allow it to succeed.

Elizabeth, on retiring one night to her chamber, was assailed by the clamorous sorrow of her female attendants; all that could be thought and invented by female ingenuity was put in force to change her resolution; arguments against the wisdom of choosing so young and inconstant a husband; protestations against his religion; recapitulations of the acts of St. Bartholomew; and the numerous plots discovered as having been formed to betray and destroy her by Catholic traitors;—all were employed, and the Queen found herself in a situation of peculiar embarrassment and annoyance.

On every side remonstrances were poured in; her dignity, her modesty, her sense were impeached; and, tortured and distressed, Elizabeth began to awaken to the necessity of yielding.

A scene of grief on her part, and disappointed ambition which took the semblance of sorrow on his, took place between the Queen and the Duke; she professed undiminished affection, but pleaded the obligation of obedience to the wishes of her people. He implored and entreated, but she had taken care that they should not be alone, fearing that she would be overcome by his despair; and her lords coming to her assistance represented that the answer of the King of France not having yet arrived, delay, at least, was necessary.

The Duke retired to his apartments, and

there, throwing the ring from him which the Queen had given him, declared that the women of England were as capricious and changeable as their uncertain climate. He resolved instantly to depart, but, on sending to Elizabeth to demand leave to retire, she fell into a state of the greatest grief, and condescended to entreat him to remain, - assuring him that if he would endure delay all would end according to their desire. She resolved to give fêtes, tournaments,-all that could amuse and detain him,and thus, for some time, he lingered on, till the country became impatient and indignant; scandalous stories began to be set on foot, libellous pamphlets circulated, and the whole face of affairs confused and disturbed.

At length it became absolutely necessary that Anjou should depart, and as he was quite wearied with the alternation of his fortunes, he was most anxious to do so. Elizabeth accompanied him as far as Canterbury, and had insisted that a gorgeous train of nobles and knights should attend him beyond sea, as far as Bruxelles. They parted with sighs and tears, and mutual vows; he to resume the stirring life he loved to lead, and she to shun all the haunts which reminded her of him whom she had so much loved.

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The picture which Zucchero had begun under such favourable auspices for her content was finished, but a change had come over it: the pensive expression of the countenance was much deepened, a gloom was given to the background of wood, the azure of the sky was clouded, some swallows, birds of fleeting sojourn, were added to the others, and, graved on the bark of the tree, beneath which the fair Persian stood, were seen mysterious sentences, expressive of her disappointed hope.

It was said that her own hands traced the lines in gold, which appear on that singular picture, which had long been concealed in the ruinous gallery at Kensington, and may now be recognised by the curious at Hampton Court. There can be read the Latin sentences with which the love-sick pedant covered the canvass; and on a shield in the foreground are conspicuous the following quaint and melancholy lines, in which too much clearness is evidently purposely avoided:—

"The restlesse swallow fits my restlesse minde,
In still revivinge, still renewinge wrongs,
Her just complaintes for crueltie unkinde
Are all the musique that my life prolonges.
With pensive thoughts my weeping stag I crown,
Whose melancholic teares my cares expresse,
His teares in silence and my sighs unknowne
Are all the physick that my harmes redresse.

THE QUEEN'S POISONER.

My onely hope was in this goodly tree,
Which I did plant in love, bring up in care,
But all in vaine, for now too late I see
The shales * be mine, the kernels others' are!
My musique may be plaintes, my physick teares,
If this be all the fruit my love-tree bears!"

• Shells.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ACCUSED.

I apprehend thee as a felon here! SHARSPEARE.

THE President Bailly, after the departure of René Bianco, had leisure to reflect on many circumstances from which he had endeavoured carefully to lead his thoughts. Alix, in all her innocence and affection, was present to his mind. No longer influenced by the artful insinuations of the Italian, all that had appeared faulty in her conduct, he reflected might be the effect of the strange and untoward circumstances in which she was placed; and his musings led him to frame excuses for her, and to sigh over their long separation.

He was in this frame of mind one morning when he left his chamber, after a sleepless night, and his natural coldness was subdued when he observed that Marcel was placing flowers in all directions in the study he was accustomed to occupy.

"What means this?" asked he, in a subdued voice.

"I have not forgotten, though others may," answered Marcel sharply, "that this day is the birthday of Mademoiselle Alix; and I do not see why the only child of my master should be looked upon as if she were dead and gone."

"She is dead to me, Marcel," said the President, sadly; "she has never sought my pardon, nor striven to return to me."

"Are you sure of that, sir?" inquired Marcel: "or is there any one interested in making you believe so, who has so reported?"

"Whom do you mean, Marcel?" said Bailly.
"Your words seem to have some allusion. I give you leave to speak out."

"Then," returned Marcel, "I will tell you at once, that you give too much credit to the tales of that Italian, of whom we are for the present well rid. He tells you that Mademoiselle Alix has never written to you, which I do not believe, for a good reason. You must know, that going one day into his room, I saw him reading letters attentively; he was in the act of burning several as I entered, and had thrust

one, which was torn, under the embers, and thought it was burnt. I confess I was curious to know what he was so full of; and when he was gone I returned to his room, and, sure enough, a piece of the paper was still untouched by the flame. Here it is, and in my mind is your daughter's handwriting; or else I learnt with the monks of St. Germain when a boy, for nothing."

So saying, he produced the slip of half-burst paper, which Bailly took with a trembling hand, and read the few words which it contained with emotion.

"Beloved Father.— Night and day I pray to kneel once more at your feet and kiss your dear hand * * * my numerous letters unnoticed * * * my brave and worthy husband * * * saved the life of your persecuted child * * * my uncle. De Hommet * * *

"It is so, indeed, Marcel!" said the President. "I have been grossly abused; my poor Alix! how shall I repair this error? René is a dangerous and deceitful man; I have been strangely fascinated by him, but I will cast off this spell and do justice to my suffering child."

"Then," said Marcel, "never suffer Bianco to re-enter your doors, and write at once to Mademoiselle if you know where she is."

"She is at La Rochelle," replied the agitated father; "there is truce between the parties at this moment? Why not seek her there myself? Doubtless she is protected by De Hommet, her poor mother's brother, and all will be explained. Prepare, Marcel, that we set out without delay, before the return, which I daily expect, of René. I know not why I feel so much in the power of that man; it is only in his absence that I breathe freely, and dare to think for myself."

Marcel, with eager delight, received this command, and resolved that no time should be lost by the President in commencing his journey, which it was agreed should be the next morning; but scarcely had Marcel quitted his master when, to his infinite vexation and terror, he beheld the unwelcome form of René Bianco himself approaching the house from the avenue which communicated with the Abbey.

The President was no less annoyed to see his intrusive visitor returned, and the reception he was able to give him was so constrained and cold, that René saw at once something had occurred inimical to his interests: however, he

carried off his uneasiness with a show of carelessness, told numerous anecdotes of the Court, related circumstances of the new King's coronation and marriage, and, by his wit and lively conversation, contrived, according to his usual custom, to interest and please the President in spite of himself.

They were walking that afternoon in the Abbey garden when Marcel approached his master, and delivered a slip of paper, which Bailly, with some confusion, read instantly, and thrust into his bosom. The words which had caused his emotion were these—" one from La Rochelle would speak with the President Bailly."

René, suspiciously alive to art in others, saw that there was some mystery which was not to be explained to him, and his fears and his conscience alike pointed to Alix and Claude. The President, however, continued his walk, and talked as before on indifferent subjects, nor did they part till the usual time; René to his chamber, and the President to the chapel of the Abbey, where his nightly prayers were said;—after which he returned to his study, and received from Marcel a letter which the messenger, who had entreated to see him, wished that he should first read.

It was that which Alix had written in which

she expressed her fears that he had been prevented from receiving her former appeals; conjured him to listen to her prayers, and to pardon the step she had taken; related her escapes and dangers, and finally referred him to the bearer of the letter, whom she feared to name lest danger might reach her husband.

Bailly was deeply affected, and all his pride and anger melted away as he dwelt upon her eloquent words. He had, without René's perceiving it, given orders to Marcel to conceal the messenger in the Abbey till night; and as he was a mendicant friar, there was little difficulty in doing so without creating suspicion.

He was now conducted by Marcel to the President's study, and left with him alone; but the curiosity of the old servant was not to be repressed, and he resolved to inform himself of the secret, which all his endeavours had failed to draw from the friar, who professed to be ignorant of the contents of the missive which had been entrusted to his care.

Stationing himself, therefore, in a corridor which led to the sleeping-room of his master, he applied his ear to an opening in the wainscot, and found that he could hear the whole conversation which ensued between the parties within, and occasionally shifting his position could see

them also. He thus became a witness of the interview between Claude and his father-in-las, and learnt all the particulars which he wished to know.

The President, when Claude kneeling at impressed himself known as the husband of impressed himself in angry and offended terms, reproaching him with treachery, and treating him as a menial and dependant unworthy of the alliance he had made. Claude, although be could boast of neither power nor riches that might cause Bailly to receive him less harshly as his son, yet recounted the untoward circumstances of his birth with eloquence so moving pleaded his affection for Alix, and expressed so much disinterested generosity, that the worldly man was subdued into the father, and all the kinder feelings of his nature took their turn.

"I had already purposed," said he, "to set forth to La Rochelle to see my child. I have been deceived too readily. René Bianco unfortunately returned this very day, doubtless with a view of continuing the plans which he has already found too successful. Be of good cheer, however; return to my dear child—tell her I will not delay to visit her, and, above all, assure her of my blessing and forgiveness. For you,

young man, your misfortunes and your generous devotion to my child claim my pity and my gratitude. Marcel will see you safely lodged; I would not have you encounter your arch foe, of whom I will rid myself before many days are past. Depart, therefore, by day-break. I shall write to my beloved Alix, and Marcel will bring my letter to you before René is stirring. Go, and my blessing attend you."

Claude, with tears of grateful acknowledgment, knelt to receive the benediction of his father-in-law; and Marcel, whose vicinity was not suspected, was summoned to reconduct him to his cell for the night. Arrived there the heart of the old servant overflowed, and he proclaimed to the young secretary that he was known: entreated to hear of his dear mistress. overwhelmed him with blessings and inquiries, and did not leave him till the sun's first rays told them that the hour was come for Claude to depart. Marcel, therefore, with reluctant step, proceeded to his master's chamber, for the letter which was to carry joy and content to the heart of Alix, and her husband descended into the convent-garden to await his return.

The reflections of Bianco, on retiring to his chamber, were of the most perplexed description. He saw that his absence had ruined his cause with Bailly, that he had, without doubt, received intelligence from his daughter, and discovered the deceit which had been practised on him.

Catherine was impatient for his return, and be could not recommence the machinations which in an unforeseen moment were at once destroyed. The will of Bailly would confirm him heir to large possessions, and he should be able to compete with Ruggieri in station, as the superior of an abbey.

All these thoughts tended to one end, and his half-formed intention of sacrificing the life of his confiding friend took a more tangible shape. Why, he asked himself, should he hesitate? even should the murder be brought home to him, his royal protectress was sufficiently powerful to screen him from punishment, and the laws were in a state that favoured the escape of the powerful, however guilty. The temporary remorse which had been awakened in his breast at the success of his last crime had speedily been effaced, and his usual indifference had returned.

Fatigued with his journey, he had at first thrown himself upon his bed to rest; but all these thoughts rising in his bosom roused him to the necessity of immediate action. He resolved to see Bailly, and to intimidate him into the signature of a paper which he had prepared, bequeathing him all his property, and excluding his daughter altogether.

"If he refuses," said he, "I will at once take my revenge; and the will which he has already made remains in my favour as before. Once secure of this, I will not wait long, so that he is my victim at all events; and a part, or the whole of his wealth, which I know is more considerable than the world supposes, will be transferred to me."

He uttered these remarks mentally, as, with a cautious step, he descended the stair which led to the President's study. Bailly was still there; he sat with a great many papers scattered about the table before him, and was re-perusing the letter of Alix, while the tears ran down his cheeks. Suddenly he looked up, and beheld before him René Bianco.

"Why are you here?" he asked abruptly;
"can I have no privacy in my own house?"

"I sought you, Bailly," answered the Italian, "to inquire the meaning of your late conduct. You could not deceive me; I am an unwelcome guest, and some occurrence has changed your feelings towards me. I do not deserve this, and require an explanation."

"The letter I hold in my hand," said Bailly,

"is explanation sufficient; it is from my daughter, whose appeals to me you have hithern suppressed. Bianco, I can be deceived m longer; your treachery is revealed,—let u part at once, and for ever. The will which you induced me to make I have destroyed; yonde fire has cancelled my injustice to my child."

René approached closer to the President; a he spoke his eyes flashed fire, and he met th stern glance of Bailly with a malignant sneer.

"This sounds well, President," said he, "but can you suppose that my measures are to be seasily thwarted as this? I have your promise and you shall abide by it. You see this paper it requires only a signature, which you can place at once, and we are again friends; refusit, and you have me for a foe. I have seldon proved myself a safe one."

Bailly rose, with indignation in his countenance, and replied:

"How long is it since a man of my station and years has been compelled to do that against which his will revolts? Away, deceiver! I scorn and spurn you!"

Before he had time to utter another word, the fierce Italian had grappled with him. Unprepared for so sudden an attack, Bailly was entirely off his guard, and was thrown violently on the floor; while René, drawing a small dagger from his girdle, held it menacingly over him.

"Your life is in my hands," said he; "sign the paper as I demand, or this is your last moment of existence."

"I will not sign away my child's inheritance," cried Bailly struggling.

"Then die, base miser!" cried René, "and leave me that daughter as a hostage of revenge."

He struck—his aim was too true, and his hand too well practised; his dagger was one prepared by his own skill, and carried with it a certainty of death. The President uttered one groan, and fell back a corpse.

Bianco rose,—gazed at the prostrate form one minute with a scowl of gratified hatred, and, spurning it from him with contempt, quitted the chamber with a firm step.

Daylight was just dawning, and he descended into the convent garden to seek the stables, where he purposed to mount his horse and commence an immediate flight. He was certain that the confusion attendant on the discovery of the abbot's death would prevent the monks and villagers from taking any very prompt measures, and he calculated on the

probability of his reaching Paris, and his sanctuary in the Louvre, before any steps could be taken which he could not guard against.

As he hurried along he beheld before him in the avenue a friar, whom he at once recognised as not being of the community, who, as he approached, seemed to retire from observation. A sudden thought struck him.should this be a secret agent of Alix? Disguises were common at the time, and that of a mendicant was likely to pass unquestioned: at all events, he resolved to accost this person. and ascertain the fact. He turned down a path which he knew must lead him so as to meet the stranger who avoided him; and, by doing so, as he expected, came full in front of him he sought before there was time for concealing his face: both started,—and both at the same moment placed their hands in their girdles. for Claude was not unarmed, and René had replaced the fatal weapon in its sheath with which he had stabbed Bailly.

"We are well met once again!" cried the Italian. "I have sought you long, and could not find you more opportunely."

"I am prepared in meeting you," answered Claude, "to behold a foe, and shun him as I would an adder in my path."

"That is less easy than you imagine, Count Gabriel de Montgomery," cried René, sneeringly; "let me be the first to call you by your title; though you have no funds to support that dignity, yet it must be pleasant to your ears."

"It is so," replied Claude, calmly. "I would rather another than the worst foe I have had called me by my name; but I expected not the courtesy from you."

"Idiot!" returned René, "I could have told you this long since, and told you too who gave the wound by which I recognised you; when the secret of your chain, fabricated by my own hands, revealed to me who you were. I sought your life when an infant, and failed; your star triumphs over my hand, but my mind still sways you,— you shall be my victim still."

At that moment cries were heard issuing from the house, and a party of vignerons who were passing near, attracted by them, had joined several domestics who, with terror in their countenances, were hurrying towards the spot where René stood with Claude.

Suddenly making a spring at Claude, the Italian strove to detain him, but, aware of his ill intents, the former was on his guard. Not knowing what might be the cause of the disturbance, and fearing that some discovery might

betray the interests of the public cause, as well as his private affairs, Claude thought it better to fly, and as he did so, dashing René from him, he heard the Italian call with a loud voice,—

"Behold the murderer! — Stop — seize the assassin of the President Bailly!"

The crowd had by this time come up, and as the avenues of the garden were unknown to him, Claude found his chance of escape by flight impossible. The startling words rang in his ears like a knell. Bailly assassinated!—and who the murderer? The question was easily answered in his mind, but the stunning horror of the fact remained. Bewildered and uncertain he rushed onwards, when, turning suddenly down a wooded path, he found himself surrounded and seized upon by the shouting villagers, and dragged with angry vehemence towards the gates of the Abbey.

"He is the Huguenot secretary of the President who ran away with his daughter; be came in disguise, and has murdered his master," was echoed from mouth to mouth.

In vain did Claude entreat to be heard; René had excited the indignation of the people by his plausible story. Bailly had been found dead in his study, stabbed by an unknown hand, his papers in confusion, and the assassin fled.

René represented himself as having, on entering a few moments before, seen the murderer attempting to escape; had pursued, overtaken, and was struggling with him when the rest came up. Marcel's cries on finding his master dead had roused the household; and so great was his grief and consternation that he had fallen senseless beside the corpse, and lay there still, while the others had hurried to the spot where René had secured the supposed friar. To the simple peasants the mere name of Huguenot suggested ideas of magic and evil deeds, nor did it the more recommend the unfortunate prisoner to the mercy of the monks, whom the terrible report of the death of their Abbot had called in troops from their cells.

Every convent was provided with dungeons, and though the simple character of the neighbourhood, and the quiet habits of the monks of Bourgueil, did not offer much opportunity or occasion for severity, yet the Abbey was not unprovided with a place of security in which to detain offenders. So monstrous a crime as this laid to the charge of Claude had never been committed in this part of the country, and the religious fraternity would have found themselves at a great loss how to act, but for the advice and directions of René Bianco, who undertook to

regulate every step necessary to be taken in the matter.

Fortunately for his purpose, there had just arrived at the monastery one of those emissais from Rome which the holy father had sent to join le Frère Pacifique, a celebrated Capuchin monk, whose zeal had greatly distinguished him in the cause of the church. The heads of the Catholic religion in Italy and Spain, alarmed at the spread of Protestantism, had united their strength to crush the growing evil, and had sent preaching brothers to France, charged to exert to the utmost their powers of persuasion and exhortation to bring the stray sheep once more into the fold.

Catherine de Medicis had promised her aid in the holy cause, and offered every encouragement to the establishment of new convents in Paris and throughout France, where stricter rules should be observed and a more severe jurisdiction held. She had obtained for the frères mineurs of Picpus the grant of a piece of land in the Faubourg St. Honoré, where le Frère Pacifique was now established, and his convent rapidly increasing. The extreme severity and zeal displayed by these Capuchins alarmed the less austere monasteries, and they

dreaded the visits and inquiries of their strict and uncompromising brethren.

It was, therefore, an event which had considerably disturbed the indolent quietude of the good brothers of Bourgueil when the envoy, Père Pierre, made his appearance amongst them; and as he had found much to cavil at in their establishment, they were particularly distressed that so appalling an occurrence as the murder of their superior, although a layman, should have furnished such an ample field for censure.

With the utmost zeal, therefore, they resolved to exhibit their horror of the crime that had been committed, and resent the disgrace brought on their community.

To listen to protestations of innocence from one who was a known heretic and schismatic was out of the question, and the testimony of René, the bosom friend of the murdered man, was heard with all due attention. Marcel, on recovering from the shock he had received, had in vain asserted the innocence of Claude, protesting that he could clear him of the charge, and prove that he had remained in his company to the last moment, and that on quitting him he went straight to the President's chamber, where

he discovered him lying murdered. René had taken care so to represent the case, that he was looked upon as a friend of the accused, and desirous to screen him from punishment, and so artfully did he contend against the truth that Marcel's entreaties and assertions were treated with contempt.

Claude was dragged before a tribunal hastily assembled, at which Père Pierre presided. He was not permitted to utter a word in his own defence, and ordered to be confined, during the necessary deliberation, in the prison of the Convent.

"This case," said Père Pierre, "is one of great turpitude, and shall be brought forward as an example. Too much lenity has been shown to the accursed Huguenots, who have been spared from a false feeling of mercy until they have risen against their protectors. This wretch shall be conducted to Paris and examined, and a public example made, capable of edifying all good Catholics and just men."

It was accordingly agreed that instead of the prisoner being taken to Angers to be tried, he should be placed in proper custody, and accompanied by René and Père Pierre himself,—who was on his return to his convent,—together with all the necessary witnesses, should forthwith be

transferred to the capital, there to abide by the judgment of the law.

"This, my good friend, Bianco," said Père Pierre to the Florentine, when they were left alone together that night,—"this is a fortunate meeting. I rejoice to be able to afford you my assistance, and shall reckon on your good offices with the Queen-mother in return, to further the views of our superior Frère Pacifique. Your numerous letters have given great satisfaction to the Holy Father; and he charged me, when I left Rome, from whence I only now return, to express to you his sense of the services rendered to our sacred cause by the intelligence you have afforded, from time to time, during this season of turmoil and conspiracy."

"I think the Pope will be still more satisfied," replied René, "when he finds that the long-coveted treasure, the cross of the Sainte Chapelle, containing an inestimable piece of sacred wood itself, is relinquished to his Holiness. Some pious friends of mine are at this moment conducting it to its destination, and it will doubtless be received with joy."

"This is, indeed, blessed news!" exclaimed the Capuchin; "and the service will not be forgotten by the Pope. Whatever, in his name, I can do to serve you, you may command." "I shall be grateful for your testimony in this affair," said René, "which will go far to criminate the guilty heretic who has caused us so much trouble. I think it better that we should set out with the prisoner without loss of time."

No objection was made to this proposal, and steps were immediately taken to put it in execution, when René found to his mortification that Marcel was nowhere to be found. The circumstance, however, soon ceased to annoy him, for he considered his plans too well laid to be baffled, and he proposed to himself to make the evasion of this witness an argument against the accused.

Meantime the victim of all this villany was languishing in the prison to which he had been consigned. Overcome with sorrow and astonishment at the sudden death of the President, Claude paced the narrow chamber, into which he was thrust, with feelings not to be described. The grief of Alix for her father's loss, her terror, her despair at his being the object of so dreadful an accusation,—the dangerous situation in which he stood, all these thoughts crowded on his mind and almost overwhelmed him by their bitterness. The probability of René being himself the murderer was

evident to his mind, and increased, if possible, the agony he felt.

While plunged in these reflections a slight noise in a corner of his prison aroused his attention, and groping in the gloom with his manacled hands he endeavoured to discover what had caused it. There was a moment's pause, when the noise was resumed, and appeared like one trying to make an aperture in the wall above. He looked up, and by the feeble ray of a small opening in the upper part of the cell, he saw a hand busily employed in removing some bricks, which, being cleared away cautiously, he distinguished through the rugged opening a face which he recognised as that of the faithful Marcel, who, placing his lips close to the aperture, in a low voice called to him. The height of the narrow cell, which appeared as if it had been a division between two walls. closed in about half-way up, with a loop-hole that admitted the light at the top, made it at first difficult for him to catch a sound. These words, however, at length reached him:- "I know you cannot be guilty - trust me!" - at the same time a small cord let down to him a piece of parchment and an inkhorn, such as was generally used by the monks. Claude seized it with avidity, and traced these words -

"To JULES BELCASTEL at La Rochelle.—Fly to my rescue!—I am accused of murder; in the power of René!—CLAUDE."

He hastily fastened this scroll to the cord, and, with an imploring action, gazed upwards towards the friendly face which watched his movements. The finger on the lip warned him to repress the exclamations of gratitude which rose to his tongue, and the cord rapidly ascending his mysterious friend disappeared, the bricks were replaced, and he was again alone.

But short time was allowed him to brood over his misfortunes, for he was soon disturbed by his jailors and hurried away from his cell, loaded heavily with irons, and placed in a conveyance, accompanied by a military escort. He was prevented speaking, and every endeavour to excite sympathy or attention was vain. In this manner he continued his way, which by its length Claude could not but consider was directed to Paris, where he doubted not that he was to be brought to trial.

After a fatiguing and miserable journey he found his surmise verified, and that his destination led him to a dungeon in the prison of the Conciergerie.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONDEMNATION.

Is this proceeding just and honourable?

SHARSPEARE.

SUCH was the deplorable state of the laws in France at this period that every sort of injustice was committed with impunity. The question of the length of a monk's beard, or whether it was proper that he should wear one at all, occupied the time of the gravest assemblies, while the investigation of an event which involved the lives and properties of innocent persons was negligently performed, or the cause altogether abandoned to chance, as it suited the convenience or caprice of the judges.

Vain were the remonstrances of the people, vain their appeals to the King, who, given up entirely to his pleasures, laughed at the petitions which poured in upon him continually.

The inhabitants of Paris addressed their en-

treaties to ears deafened to all but the sounds of mirth and frivolity, and all the great officers of the kingdom followed the example set them by their King.

The monarch, accompanied by his profligate companions, was accustomed during Lent to go about the streets masked and disguised as merchants, priests, advocates, and all descriptions of callings, and commit excesses of the most disgraceful description; not only did they attack all persons whom they met, but would break open shops, enter houses, and carry terror and confusion wherever they appeared. They did not confine themselves even to the citizens whom they delighted to injure and insult, but would intrude into the houses of the nobility in the time of the Carnival, and by every means in their power annoy and distress the guests.

The clergy were little better treated than the laity, for the Pope, anxious only to obtain power for his peculiar emissaries, gave permission to the King to alienate the temporal possessions of the priests. Their goods were seized upon and sold whenever the King was in want of money, and their spirited remonstrances treated with scorn. The procureurs of the different courts found themselves equally ill-treated, suspended from their offices, or constrained to act against

their better judgments. Little chance, therefore, was there that the trial of Claude should be conducted with more consideration or attention to justice.

The representations of Père Pierre tended to prejudice the judges against the Huguenot accused; and as no person of rank and power came forward to offer bribes or menaces in order to procure his enlargement, the unfortunate son of Montgomery seemed abandoned to his fate.

René appeared as the accuser, and several monks and domestics gave their evidence respecting Claude's mysterious visit: his disguise as a mendicant friar, and numerous other particulars, made the case appear very strong against him.

René exerted every nerve, and all his eloquence was called into action to induce the venal judges to condemn him.

"The prisoner is," said René, "a discarded servant of the late President, expelled his house, in consequence of presumptuously raising his views to his patron's daughter. He carried his evil designs so far that, by means of spells and charms, known to those of his accursed religion, he contrived to obtain her affections, seduced her from her father's house, abandoned

her among strangers, and, coming concealed to the peaceful retreat of the disconsolate old man, completed his villany by murder. Cm there be wickedness greater than this? Cm there be sorrow deeper than mine, who was the friend of Bailly, and the betrothed of his daughter?"

The murmurs of the Court became loud and indignant, and not without the utmost difficulty did Claude at last obtain a hearing. He stated as clearly as possible the reasons which induced him to visit Bailly, their interview and parting.

"The servant who introduced him to his victim," exclaimed René, "has absconded; he was doubtless an accomplice. Unfortunately he has escaped the search made for him; but his absence proves his guilt, and further evidence is unnecessary."

In fine, the judges, swayed by the arguments of René and little disposed to show mercy, were induced to deliver an iniquitous sentence, which, without further investigation, condemned Claude, as guilty of the murder, to suffer death, In vain did he entreat that time might be allowed for the appearance of the servant whose testimony must acquit him; in vain, in the most moving language did he appeal to their feelings,

represent the agonies of his unfortunate wife, and implore their consideration; he was heard by persons familiarized to scenes of sorrow and suffering, and who had no compassion to bestow on any of the Huguenot party, whose fate they were well convinced would excite no interest or inquiry, and Claude was reconducted to his dungeon to leave it only when led to the place of execution.

Marcel, meanwhile, after he had obtained from Claude the necessary instructions how to act, having carefully concealed himself till an opportunity of escape occurred, resolved to lose no time in hastening to La Rochelle, and informing his friends of his dangerous position. He was well convinced in his own mind that the guilty person was no other than René.

He felt certain that, but for the artifices of which he knew the Italian to be capable, the innocence of Claude could not fail to be instantly established; but he also knew that gold would not be spared, nor any effort of malice, to crush the foe whom René had resolved on destroying.

He met with little impediment on his journey, as the truce still continued, and the two parties, tired of their long contention, did not attempt to offer molestation to each other. Notwithstanding his desire again to behold his master's daughter, to whom he was much attached, he resolved not to attempt seeing her, as he felt sure his grief would betray the fearful secret it was so necessary to conceal.

He arrived at the house of Belcastel wearied and exhausted, but unshrinking from the task he had imposed on himself. To him he delivered the billet, and recounted all the circumstances of the disastrous affair.

Struck with unspeakable horror and impetuous in all his actions, Belcastel deliberated not a moment. He rushed into his wife's apartment, where he started to find Alix.

- "Lesselline," he exclaimed, in a hurried tone, "I am obliged to leave you for a time on urgent business. Let not my absence distress you, it is unavoidable, but shall be as short as possible."
- "Whither go you, Jules?" cried Lesselline; "for mercy's sake leave me not in this uncertainty!—what new danger threatens?"
- "Where is my husband? does any peril menace him?" exclaimed Alix, as she gazed on him in trembling dread.
- "Ask me nothing," cried he, "all will be well,—there is no fear,—calm yourself, dear Alix,—dearest Lesselline, be assured I will

hasten back with glad tidings ere many days be past. Meantime adieu, and blessings rest with you!"

As Belcastel, in confused accents, spoke these sentences, he clasped his wife to his bosom, pressed the hand of Alix, and quitted them, after repeated assurances that business connected with the truce alone called him to Paris, though his disordered looks and faltering speech contradicted what he uttered; in a few moments, accompanied by Marcel, he was on his way to the capital.

They found nothing talked of on their arrival in Paris but the tragical death of the President Bailly, and the approaching execution of his murderer.

Belcastel presented himself at the Conciergerie, but found entreaties, bribes, and threats equally unavailing to obtain him access to the prisoner. Distracted with dread, he then sought the officers who had decided so summarily the fate of an innocent man; Marcel accompanied him, and urged his claim to be examined as a witness, proclaimed his power to clear the accused, and called upon them to attend to his representations. All was in vain, they were treated with contumely and harshness, and at length forcibly expelled the court, and threat-

ened with imprisonment should they venture to re-appear.

The despair of Belcastel was now at its height; all hearts seemed closed against the prayers of a Huguenot; justice in their case seemed but a name; René was evidently all powerful, and he thought with distraction of the prospect before him. Was there no way to save him? could he think of no expedient? there was one resource, a frail one perhaps, but he had no other; driven to desperation he resolved to adopt it, and without allowing himself time for reflection on the prudence or imprudence of the measure hastened to put his design in execution.

Marcel had also conceived a plan which he imagined might offer some chance of success. He considered that Mabille had held an office of great trust about the late King, and might possess influence enough to induce Henry the Third to interfere to save the life of an oppressed subject.

To Mabille he therefore went, and imparted to her the history of Claude's misfortunes. Her grief and agitation were extreme, and her terror still greater, that she had no power to effect his rescue.

"I will dare all," exclaimed she, "the King,

the Queen-mother I will assail in turn; but, alas! will they listen to me? I have always been rather tolerated than liked by them, and he over whom I, at times, had power, is gone!"

Marcel hesitated not to tell her of his knowledge of the birth of Claude, with all the particulars of which he had become acquainted, having heard the communication made by him to Bailly on that fatal evening, when he received his blessing and forgiveness; and they wept together over the sad fate of both father and son.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WARNING.

Chacun de ses enfants nourri sous sa tutelle, Devint son ennemi dès qu'il régna sans elle. Ses mains autour du trône, avec confusion, Semoient la jalousie et la division.

VOLTAIRE ON CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.

Fasts and rejoicings filled the palaces and grand hotels of Paris, expense and profusion reigned. A magnificent marriage was about to take place between the Viscount de Joyeuse, now created Duke, and the sister of the Queen, Madame Marguerite de Lorraine.

The poets Ronsard and Baif were busily engaged in composing masques and poems to celebrate the event, for which services each was to receive a thousand crowns of gold, besides rich vestments to be worn on the auspicious occasion. The sum of four hundred thousand crowns was promised with the bride to the

favourite of the King, besides a large sum which the Duke de Mercœur, the head of the house of Vaudemont, engaged to pay with his sister.

When the enormous expense which he was incurring was represented to the King, he answered that he intended to economise as soon as he had married off his three children, as he called D'Arques, La Valette, and D'O.

The people were taxed to the utmost to procure ready money for all this display, and murmurs were loud and deep against the extravagant heartlessness of the unprincipled monarch and his detested favourites. The Queen-mother saw, every day, that Henry was becoming odious to his people, and heard with alarm that the cry in the streets of "Vive Guise!" followed the powerful and popular rival of the house of Valois, wherever he appeared.

The fête she gave, however, in honour of this ill-assorted marriage, exceeded in splendour all those of the Court; and her ballet of Ceres and her nymphs was considered the finest, best imagined, and best executed, of any that had ever yet been seen. Gold was showered with an unsparing hand around to supply these follies and extravagances, while the starving and oppressed people looked on with haggard countenances

and hearts execrating the wanton cruelty of their tyrants.

Seventeen entertainments were given in succession by the relatives of the bride, whose dress, superintended by Henry himself, was said to have cost, on her bridal day, no less a sum than ten thousand crowns for the making only. The dresses of the King and the bridegroom were exactly alike, and so covered with embroidery, pearls, and precious stones, that the rich cloth of gold beneath could scarcely be No one was permitted to appear in the same costume at more than one of the fêtes. and the expense was consequently enormous. Feasts, tournaments, and masquerades, succeeded; and it was computed that the King must have expended at least twelve hundred thousand crowns in these festivities.

Scarcely had the Court recovered from the fatigue of so much splendour, and the people begun to breathe from the exactions necessary to support it, when another marriage was announced, which it was said the King had desired should be private, as the money expended on a public ceremony would have proved to the Swiss deputies, just arrived to demand their neglected dues, that he could procure funds for his amusement though not for his debts.

Not the less, however, were the sums obtained and squandered on this marriage of the Duke d'Epernon and the Countess de Candoles, a lady of the Court; and the necklace of pearls placed by Henry round the neck of the bride was said to be of the value of a hundred thousand crowns.

In the midst of all this gaiety and gorgeousness, Henry never laid aside his chaplet of death's heads, which he always wore depending from his waist, to the great surprise of the whole Court.

Extravagance and folly seemed at their height; the King's mania for effeminate amusements was carried beyond all bounds, and there was no folly or frivolity which did not find favour in his sight. The care of his person seemed to occupy all the time he did not give to the adornment of that of his heautiful wife. His hands were every night covered with gloves, and a cloth dipped in essences was laid over his face, in order to preserve the delicacy of his skin. His hair, which was red, he dyed of a glossy black, and curled it with the greatest care. He spent hours in painting his eyebrows, and giving a proper shade of white and red to his cheeks. He was fond of dressing himself as a female, with his white neck and throat displayed, ornamented with a necklace of pears, and embroidered falling ruff.

A few of those who surrounded him, disgusted at his habits, and aware of the contempt brought upon the Court by manners so contrary to decency or common sense, resolved to attempt a reform by working, not upon his reason, but on his superstition, which appeared to increase with his frivolity. Some of the young Queen's ladies offended at the little attention ther received, annoyed at the foppish egotism of the minions of the King, and sighing for the compliments and apparent devotion to their charms, which they had been accustomed to while the susceptible Henry of Navarre and the gallant François d'Anjou were still amongst them, urged De Joyeuse and St. Luc, then in high favour, to exert themselves in the cause, and imagine some scheme to change this humiliating state of affairs.

One night, after an entertainment in which Henry and his minions had appeared, dressed as females, and with a party of the youngest of his courtiers had danced and flirted, and imitated the manners of the most coquettish ladies of his mother's 'bande,' he retired to his sleeping chamber, and, dismissing his attendants, threw himself on his bed and gave way to a passion of tears. He remained thus some time, when suddenly, close to his ear, a hollow sigh made him start: he rose and looked around,—no one was near; all was silent, and the bell of the Palace struck two; that hour always revived painful and terrible ideas when its remembrance came unexpectedly upon him, and a cold shudder crept over his frame as he sank again on his pillow and closed his eyes. Presently the sigh was repeated; and as he lay motionless and awe-struck, these words were uttered near him in a strange, unearthly, and distinct voice:

"Henry, thy good spirit, wearied and grieved to see thy fatal wanderings from the path of rectitude, at length has gained the Divine permission to warn thee of thy danger. The luxury, extravagance, frivolity, and effeminacy of thy Court attract a curse towards thee, — thy subjects fall off from their allegiance; heresy lifts its hydra head; enemies of all kinds rise up and threaten; thy kingdom is menaced with destruction; the crown totters on thy head; the sceptre is sliding from thy grasp. Division, anarchy, confusion, and ruin are around thee; and, sunk in low delights, thou liest prone amidst the infamy which will overwhelm thee.

"Rouse thy slumbering spirit; call forth thy

better nature; spurn aside vice; and put on the armour of virtue, or perish in thy guilt, and that soon!"

The voice ceased; and Henry remained in a stupor of terror and amazement. When he was next day he was an altered man; and on the admission of his favourites to his presence, they beheld him haggard, worn, full of care, and trembling with agitation. Not less altered in manner and appearance was Saint Luc; and Henry, much struck with the similarity of their apparent feelings, called him aside, and inquired the reason of the change he observed.

"Alas, sire!" said Saint Luc, "a fearill event has occurred to me; a vision has disturbed my mind."

"What vision?" exclaimed the King; "I charge you to impart to me instantly the truth. I too have passed a night of mysterious wonder."

"Your Majesty must know, then," replied Saint Luc, "that, after our revels of last night, I had scarcely lain down in my bed when the lights which burn in my chamber became suddenly so dim that I called to my chamberlain to remove them and bring others; he did so, and I then dismissed my people. After which, I fell into a disturbed sleep, and waking suddenly

with a start, I gazed round me, and in the Venice mirror opposite where I lay I beheld a face looking out upon me. The features were those of the King your father; the eyes were menacing and terrible; and forth from the lips issued a voice which bade me beware, for the punishment of wickedness was about to fall upon France. 'The King,' said the hollow voice, 'is doomed unless he change his present life; Heaven is irritated, and the saints condemn him. If in three days there is no alteration for the better, France and her deluded monarch shall fall.'

"Your Majesty may imagine my terror; and I was hesitating whether or not to inform you of the occurrence when your commands have made me do so. Forgive the truth which I am constrained to utter."

Henry was deeply affected; he resolved that the warning should not be in vain; and, sending for his Queen, in whose piety he had great confidence, he recounted to her the startling fact which had so impressed his mind.

This weak and bigoted princess, a slave to the counsels of Auger the Jesuit, and her confessor, Berangreville, was struck with terror, and by every means in her power endeavoured to persuade the King of the danger in which he stood. She proposed fasts and pilgrimages, and entreated him to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Chartres, whose intercession she doubted not would avail them greatly. Meantime she offered, not only to make continued prayers for the safety of both his soul and body, but vowed to inflict corporeal punishment on herself, in order to propitiate offended Heaven.

Preparations were immediately made; and Henry, much to the mortification of his troop of fops, insisted on their all accompanying him and his Queen on foot, in the habit of Penitents, to the great Cathedral of Chartres, where the Black Virgin of Miracles, surrounded by all those relics which, even at the present day, are objects of wonder and devotion, held her reign.

The journey, though long and painful, was undertaken and performed; and on foot did this crowd of illustrious pilgrims return to Paris. The night after, they walked in procession through the streets, forming a band of not less than two hundred; nor were any of these forced devotees permitted to escape, but condemned for nine days to lodge in cells in the new Convent of the Capuchins, and to listen to interminable exhortations from the

holy fathers, delighted at such an opportunity of exhibiting their eloquence and their zeal.

Enraged at this tyranny of devotion, the exhausted, vexed, and discomfited courtiers were resolved to be revenged for so much fatigue and annoyance; and feeling convinced that the King's credulity had been imposed upon by some of their fraternity, they set about discovering the authors of the cheat and of their misfortunes.

Bribes soon effected the desired information, and the servants of Saint Luc and Joyeuse were induced to confess the trick that their masters had played.

These two courtiers had, in consequence of the late marriage of De Joyeuse, been excused from attending the processions and pilgrimages, and they secretly exulted in the annoyance of the rest, and the terrors their invention had inspired.

One evening, soon after this, Henry was sitting at table, for the first time beginning to enjoy himself in his accustomed manner, when a sudden storm, which burst with great violence over the palace, renewed all his agonies of fear and remorse. He jumped up from the board, and rushed frantically down the stairs, nor stopped in his descent till he had

reached the cellars, where he insisted on the tering, dragging with him his three youngest favourites, and there, cowering and trembing, he remained for several hours, much to their discomfort and his own.

"Sire," at length exclaimed Maugiron, one of the party, "this is all very horrible, and very little entertaining; but as we have now time, and your Majesty seems resolved to stare us and yourself with cold and hunger, it is but right that we should let you know the real state of things. You have been grossly imposed on by De Joyeuse and Saint Luc, and their pretended visions are nothing but trick and deception."

"How say you?" cried Henry. "Explain,
— it is impossible."

"It is true," replied the favourite, peevishly, "and we ought to have discovered it long ago. I would we had employed our gold as we have lately thought of doing, before we undertook that cursed pilgrimage, which has, I fear, ruined the symmetry of my feet for ever. The joints of my toes will never recover their shape, — and as for Quelus, his complexion is destroyed."

"For the love of Heaven, what does this mean?" exclaimed the King.

"Let us quit this damp vault first," said Maugiron; "and when once my nerves are recovered from the din of the thunder and the chill of this detestable cellar, I will unfold a plot which will amaze your royal ears."

Thus exhorted, Henry ventured from his hiding-place, and re-ascending the stairs retired with his three sons, as he called the chosen trio who accompanied him into a small apartment where they could converse freely, and there listened to the account of Maugiron.

"You must know," he began, "that these traitors to our peace and your honour, imagined to have a pipe conveyed from the anteroom of your sleeping chamber to the head of your bed, and through this tunnel did they pour their deceptious warnings, with which neither Heaven nor the saints had any concern whatever."

Thunderstruck at this discovery, which he took immediate pains to verify, Henry was seized with shame and indignation, and vented his rage in execrations and blasphemies, which suited well the temper of his companions.

Saint Luc was obliged to fly from Paris, to avoid his resentment, and De Joyeuse found that he had lost his affections, and gained nothing by his artifice. From that time Henry looked upon him with mistrust and suspicion, insulted him on all occasions, and on one taunted him with cowardice.

"Give me," cried De Joyeuse, indignantly, "the command of an army against your enemies, and you shall see if these reproaches are deserved."

"An army of monkeys and mountebanks, perchance," sneered Henry.

"Of men," retorted De Joyeuse; "if any are to be found in France out of the ranks of Henry of Navarre."

"I shall take you at your word," replied Henry; "and shall hope soon to send you against the Huguenots, where you can try your valour with the Gascon,—an ape against a bear."

Although Henry after the discovery of the cheat put upon him by his favourites had ceased those exercises of piety which terror had extorted from him, it was far otherwise with Louise de Lorraine, who would not be convinced but that the warning really came from Heaven, and encouraged in this idea by the priests with whom she was surrounded gave herself up to penitence and prayer, leading the life rather of a nun, than that of the wife of a prince devoted to pomp and show. She could not

avoid conforming to the habits of Henry in many particulars, and had hitherto consented to be decked in the gorgeous trappings in which he loved to see her adorned, but she did so with grief of heart, and expiated the sin in private by severities fit only for a recluse of the strictest order. That which in spite of all the obedience and meekness which marked her character she could least endure, was the pride and presumption of her rival in the King's affections, Renée de Chateauneuf. This woman, whose extraordinary beauty and spirit had gained the first affections of Henry, had for a time lost her power, while his passion for the innocent and lovely Marie de Clèves continued; but forced to unite himself to a princess whom he had not preferred, and whose charms, though very remarkable, were unsupported by any powers of mind, he was unable to resist the allurements and attractions of her whom even during his absence in Poland he had not forgotten, and to whom it was said, at one time, he had given a promise of marriage, and left with her the royal jewels as a pledge of his sincerity.

At first when he re-appeared as King of France, his whole attention was taken up with the festivities of his marriage and his admiration for the gentle Louise, but soon he began to grow weary of her continued and unvarying sweetness, and the passive obedience she displayed; indeed he was somewhat mortified to observe that she appeared totally unelated by the grandeur of her new position, which was a striking contrast to her former life at the obscure court of her father, where she had to endure daily mortifications from an imperious mother-in-law.

Renée de Chateauneuf, therefore, by degrees resumed her sway, and exhibited her insolence and pride on all occasions, while the mild Queen endeavoured to shut her eyes to the degradation to which she was obliged to submit. So far had the impertinence and mischievous character of the dangerous favourite carried her, that she had even dared to insinuate that the Queen was attached to the young Count de Salm who had lately visited the French court, and who was known to have had pretensions formerly to the hand of Louise. She represented that the young bride still regretted her lost lover, and so artfully did she contrive, that Henry began to look upon her fabrication as the truth, and treat her victim with marked indifference.

Being invited to a magnificent entertainment

at the Tuileries, she ventured to appear dressed exactly in the same manner as the Queen, with the same colours and disposition of jewels, and entered the saloon sweeping along with all the disdain and haughty contempt which her royal rival might well have shown towards her.

This was more than even Louise could bear; the Queen-mother felt her dignity as much insulted. Both therefore on this occasion approached the King, and Louise with firmness and some expression of anger addressed him, desiring to know whether he acknowledged her for his wife, and who that presumptuous subject might be who dared to assume her character.

Henry, ashamed and disgusted, resolved to put an end to these scenes, and with a sudden revulsion of feeling protested that La Chateauneuf's impudence was unwarrantable and unpardonable. She received an immediate command to quit Paris and never more to appear at Court.

The subsequent history of this woman, who played for so long a period a part in the private affairs of the kingdom, and consequently influenced public events, was singular.

Shortly after her banishment she, who had been remarkable for her pride, descended so low as to marry an obscure Florentine, named Antinotti, whose infidelity she discovered, and driven to desperation by the knowledge of his crime stabbed him with her own hand.

No inquiries were made respecting this murder, and she became again a wife, being united to the Baron de Castelane, to whom Henry the Third presented a large dower with her: there is, therefore, reason to suppose she had again entered into his favour. She appeared once more at Court, and the tragical death of her second husband was attributed to her malice; for she having enraged the grand prior of France, a natural son of Henry the Second, against Castelane, they met, and after a frightful conflict were both left dead upon the spot. She died at last in obscurity, without a friend or partisan, having outlived all regard or notice from any over whom she had either triumphed or had seduced.

Henry at length seeming to awake as from a fevered dream, resolved to listen to the representations of his mother, and, putting a stop to his expensive frivolities, at least for a time, attend to the business of his kingdom.

A panic, of a different nature to the former, then seemed to take possession of him, and he heard with consternation all that was passing around him.

"Your harsh conduct to Marguerite," said

Catherine, "has offended the people, and irritated her husband and Anjou. She has great influence over both, and you must repair this imprudence as quickly as you can. War menaces you in every quarter,—in Gascony, Languedoc, Dauphiné, and Poitou. Henry of Navarre heads the Huguenots; François in Champagne leads on a powerful army, and the best and bravest of France flock daily to the two standards."

"Go, Madam!" cried the King, hastily: "you who understand these affairs, hasten to place things in the best light, and save me from the consequences of my own folly and imprudence."

"I must have an interview with Anjou,—
there is no other way,—and endeavour to bring
him to reason by promises and entreaties.
Marguerite shall accompany me, and we must
endeavour to make her forget her late treatment," said Catherine.

"Obtain peace on the best terms you can, Madam," cried Henry. "I have neither men nor money, and "—he added bitterly,—"no friends, either! My brother Charles left me his crown, and his wretchedness with it. I am betrayed, abandoned, detested,—but not more by my people than I abhor myself! You "—

he added, bitterly,--"you could have prevented this, and you have driven me to it. Give me back all of which your cruelty has deprived me !-Restore me the past, and let me forget the disgraceful present! Do you suppose that a mind like mine can be content with the frivolous and wicked life I lead?-Do you really imagine these gewgaws please me? You know well I prize them not, for your art exceeds my own:-but all is your work. I know that I am cruel, vindictive, reckless, indolent,-how different I might have been but for you! Frown not, I have never been deceived, --your fatal policy I too plainly recognised in the death of her who could have changed my nature. I loved her with so true an affection that I had not deemed my heart capable of its force.—I should have grown pure in the light of her purity !-- I should have become virtuous in the sunshine of her virtue! - I had resolved, when I re-entered France, to live for her sake another life, - to change my habits of pleasure and dissipation, to reflect, to study, to feel, and to repent. The certainty of her affection created me anew; I trembled at my former self, - I almost shuddered to think that one, polluted like me, should dare to approach her! I resolved to make myself worthy of her divine regard, and frame my human nature into a semblance of her heavenly spirit. She confided in me, and I was beginning to deserve her confidence:-she loved me with all her innocent heart,-she believed me worthy, and I should have been so. I lost all memory of evil things while gazing on her .-Religion and hope sprang in my soul as I beheld her! She was sacrificed !- she died! - I ask not how, lest I abhor the perpetrators of such an act. I know it was for me she fell,-and what is gained by it? I have now no end in existence; - what would it avail if I were virtuous or brave, great or noble?where is my reward? Wickedness and cruelty alone are safe: the world is their natural atmosphere :- the world of this accursed Court. where I pass a life of torture and exist but by deceit and hypocrisy! Since that great loss, which has annihilated me, I cast to the winds all memory of my vain dreams of good, all that I had planned, and hoped, and trusted. - No more struggles against inclination, - no vain desire to become a star of goodness! Rather would I be a desolating flame of evil !- rather create for myself a universe of enjoyment, all sense-no soul !- and I have done so ! Ha ! ha!-I have become a wonder to myself and

others, — a marvel of iniquity and — happiness!"

"Henry," said the Queen, with a blanched cheek and a contracted brow, "I have borne much from you which it befits me not to bear. Your ingratitude is bitter to my soul, for I have not deserved it from you! I came to warn and save you, and you insult and brave me!"

"Speak on, Madam," returned Henry, recovering his usual manner; "you shall never hear this again from me; you know me now, and it is well you should. But, to our business. Let my ministers assemble; — I have not forgotten the eloquence I derived from you, nor am I so sunk in frivolous pursuits that I cannot rouse myself, if it must needs be. Henry of Navarre shall not triumph in every way. I will be myself, at least for a time. Act as you think proper about Marguerite; we must have peace, and let us promise it. Guise is too powerful,—every day he becomes more so,—it will at last be necessary that I take his place, and I will do so, but not yet. The time will come when I will reign alone, and no longer endure his dictation; but that shall be thought of hereafter."

For some time after this interview between the mother and son, Henry appeared to have

altogether renounced his follies. His eloquent addresses to his ministers, his clear views of policy, his spirited remonstrances against the abuses of certain classes, his professions of love towards his people, and desire to see them righted, his apparent liberality in religious matters,-all tended to amaze and delight his subjects, and all France began to hope he was about to redeem the promise of his early years, when as a hero he had won all hearts. Soon, however, was the dream dispelled, for his relapses were too frequent to admit of certainty, and though he never altogether fell back into the indolent supineness from which he had been roused, he had not moral courage to resist the temptations with which he was surrounded, and seemed to exist only to deceive others and bimself.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SCAPFOLD.

She hath forgot how many a woeful stoure For him she late endured: she speaks no more Of past: true is't that true love hath no pow'r To looken back.

SPENCER.

But tho', dear youth, thou should'st be dragg'd
To yonder ignominious tree,
Thou shalt not want a faithful friend
To share thy bitter fate with thee.

JEMMY DAWSON.

ALIX, after Belcastel had left the chamber, stood motionless, as if rooted to the spot, without heeding the tears of her friend, who had sunk almost senseless on a seat. Some danger to her husband appeared to her as certain as though Belcastel had announced the fact of his present situation. She attempted to follow him, but had only power to support herself to the casement, where she beheld him, accompanied by a stranger, as it appeared to her, hastily mounting and with all speed riding from the door.

She darted from the room, reached that which he had just quitted, although unconscious of what she sought, and there the first object that caught her eye was the paper written by Claude, which Belcastel, in his imprudent haste, had dropped on the floor. She read-" I am accused of murder." The words seemed traced in letters of flame-her starting eyes were riveted on the dreadful characters as with frantic terror she repeated the sentence. Her husband accused-dragged away-condemned-executed -all rushed before her mind's eve, and, still holding the fatal scroll, she re-entered the apartment of Lesselline. She had no words to tell the fearful story, but pointing to the lines, her friend but too soon perceived the cause of the wildness in her looks.

"Lesselline," cried the wife of Claude, "I must follow—I must see my husband—farewell!"

"No Alix! no, dearest friend!" exclaimed Lesselline; "trust to Belcastel, he will save him, if human power can do it; you cannot aid him, and may but involve yourself in ruin."

"He is in the power of René; I know, therefore, that there is no hope, but my place is where he is, and I can die with him," said Alix, in a firm voice, as she collected all her strength, determined to attempt the project she had conceived.

No representations, no entreaties could shake her resolution, and assuming the habit of a peasant, as little distinguished as possible, covered with the large mantle usually worn by that class of persons, and provided with means to forward her journey, Alix quitted La Rochelle, and once more found herself a wanderer. She took advantage of any conveyance she could meet with. and sometimes walked many leagues, for communication with distant parts of the country was at that time both difficult and dangerous for an unprotected female. How she surmounted all she was scarcely conscious, her mind was full of a vague horror and a presentiment of evil that confused and appalled her; but she was endowed with strength beyond her hopes, and, after hardship and exposure which at another time she could not have borne, she arrived at length in Paris, uncertain in her object, and filled with doubt and terror. As she entered the city gates she observed a great number of people collected to witness the feats of a mountebank rope-dancer.

The crowd which pressed around him was so dense that the unfortunate Alix, exhausted with fatigue and anxiety, could with difficulty make her way through: suddenly, in the midst of one

of the most extraordinary vaults of the mountebank, a cry was heard at a little distance.

"To the Conciergerie! the execution is about to take place!"

A rush was immediately made, and the trembling Alix, leaning against a wall for support, in accents almost inarticulate inquired of some person near who was to suffer.

"The murderer of the President Bailly," was

Alix uttered a shriek of horror. "Who-who is the accused?" gasped she.

"The accused," replied the speaker, "is Claude Emars, secretary to Bailly; he who ran away with his daughter."

Alix had no need of the answer—her dread and despair had already revealed the truth. She felt the necessity of desperate resolution; she felt that if her senses deserted her at this moment all was lost, and Claude must die without her having beheld him.

"Will any," said she, in a hoarse and scarcelyaudible voice, "conduct me to the place of execution? I will reward him amply who will do such a service to a relation of the accused."

The person whom she addressed turned sharply round as she grasped his arm convulsively.

"No," answered he, "there is nothing new

in a Huguenot's death; besides, I'd rather look on this antic here."

She released her hold, and was attempting to rush from the spot, when an elderly man of decent appearance bade her accept his conduct, and he would take charge of her. Scarcely heeding what he said she suffered him to lead her forward, and hurried wildly along, following the direction of the crowd. Her eves fixed, and unconscious on what she gazed, she reached, with her guide, the great square where the preparations for the intended execution were arranged; the man paused, for the pressure of the multitude was so great that to advance farther was perilous. Still Alix struggled on, he attempted to withhold her as, without uttering a word, she writhed in his grasp; at this moment the prisoner was brought out, and conducted by guards to the foot of the scaffold.

He walked with a firm and undaunted air, till, having ascended a few steps, he turned round to the people, and in a loud voice cried out:—"I am an innocent man, and unjustly condemned without a hearing."

There was a murmur among the people who, ever ready to yield to new excitement, heard his confident address with surprise, while his youth and noble demeanour created a sentiment of pity in every breast.

The guards, however, urged him on and prevented his again speaking: he had advanced a few steps higher, when the momentary silence of the crowd was broken by loud and repeated shrieks. Alix had seen the accused, — had heard his voice,— and her efforts became more violent, kept back as she was by the brutal populace;— his foot was on the last step, and in a piercing voice she cried out,

"Let me pass! — if you are human—let me pass! — I am his wife!"

A shudder ran through the crowd, every one shrank back, and Alix, unimpeded by all, darted along to the foot of the scaffold, and was divided from Claude only by his guards. They at first endeavoured to prevent her approach, but, whether intimidated by the hooting of the mob or feeling some touch of compassion for her wretched situation, they made way for her, and in a moment Claude held her senseless in his arms.

Scarcely had the deeply-interested assembly time to look upon this spectacle, when a loud tumult was heard at a distance, and an immense body of people was seen advancing, armed with swords, clubs, staves and every species of weapon. At their head was a young man, whose deadly pale countenance and hollow sparkling eyes expressed some powerful inward

feeling. As he rushed along, with gestures of impatience, he exclaimed,—

"Citizens, will you give up your rights?—will you suffer the laws to be profaned by unjust magistrates?—will you allow the innocent to be sacrificed before your eyes? The real murderer of the President Bailly is known; he can be pointed out by a witness whom they have refused to hear. Claude Emars is innocent,—Rescue! rescue, from oppression and injustice!"

The words flew from mouth to mouth, and echoed through the enormous crowd, swelled by the hostile band that swept along like a torrent through the streets. "The students! — the students!" cried a thousand voices, "let us follow the students of St. Germain des Prés!"

There was not an instant's pause, no opposition met their progress; the mob fell back, the guards attempted not to impede so formidable a body. Arrived at the spot to which their speed was directed, Belcastel in a loud voice commanded that the prisoner should be delivered, proclaiming that he designed to offer no violence to any one, but that since justice was in hands unworthy of such a trust, he and his comrades were resolved to administer it themselves.

The little resistance which was encountered

by this resolute band was soon put an end to, and Belcastel, springing upon the platform where stood Claude, holding in his arms his inanimate wife, was soon pressed to his friend's bosom.

"Alas! Jules," exclaimed the agonized husband, "of what avail is my safety? She is dead!"

"No,—no!" cried Belcastel, assisting to support her, and lifting the thick ringlets from her face; "she breathes,—it is but faintness; hope better, my dear friend;—be collected, be firm,—we have but a moment."

He then advanced to the edge of the scaffold, and thus spoke to the people.

"Citizens, — I would not lead you into danger, nor excite you to hostility against the laws, but I would enforce their execution; and in the name of all present I demand of the judges who sentenced an innocent man, that Jean Marcel shall be instantly produced, and his deposition heard respecting the murder of the President, and that he be confronted with René Bianco, whom I accuse as the guilty-person."

At the name of René a burst of indignation was heard, and loud cries were uttered by the people of "Down with the Italians! Long live the students, who defend our rights! Where is the evil spirit of St. Catheine! — bring forth the Queen's Poisoner! Release the prisoner,—let Marcel be examined,—will see him; — no suppressing witness! Justice for the people!" and a thousand other exclamations of excitement and fury.

The magistrates, amazed and confounded, sw their power treated with contempt and these selves in danger. Bold in evil, and careless to prevent the effusion of innocent blood, they were cowards in the moment of peril to themselves; they gazed on each other in uncertain fear, but without making any demonstration of yielding.

New cries, however, now arose. "Let us set fire to the prison," shouted the mob, "and burn the drones in their hive!"

This determined them; and one of the least timid of the party mounted the scaffold, and addressed the hooting crowd below.

"This proceeding," said he, after having with difficulty obtained a hearing, " is most unwarrantable: but since it appears that there are other witnesses who have been illegally kept back, we consent that a new trial shall be applied for, and the person named examined."

This announcement was received with shouts;

[•] The Queen-mother was called St. Catherine in derision.

and when Marcel, who was watching with eager impatience the permission to ascend the scaffold, was seen to join the group already there, loud applause, as in a theatre, greeted him. The people, however, were not content with the promise made of a new trial, they insisted that Claude should be instantly released; and would attend to no remonstrances to the contrary. Louder and louder grew the din; and the probability was that the mob would have obtained their desire, when a sudden interruption was put to their attempts. The city guard, finding to what lengths the populace were likely to proceed, had despatched some of their band to procure more effectual assistance; and a company of regular troops arriving seemed likely to put a speedy end to the discussion.

Claude, almost distracted with fears for Alix, who had not recovered her senses, knelt beside her in an agony of sorrow, unmindful of the howling and yelling around him, seeing only her inanimate form, and trembling only for her existence. Marcel, weeping, supported her, and endeavoured to soothe his anguish by assurances that she still breathed. Belcastel in vain tried to make himself heard; and the dismay and confusion were at the height, when a party of the royal guards dashed amongst the crowd,

and the Duke d'Epernon, waving his swort, rode up to the scaffold, and in an authoritative voice demanded the reason of the uproar.

So many voices answered, that it was with difficulty he could comprehend the meaning of their vociferations.

"In the name of his Majesty I charge you peace!" cried he.

He was answered by hooting, and cries of "Let his Majesty give us justice then, though he has lost his Grace! * We will have a new trial; we will have justice, or take it!"

"How, ye vile crew!" cried the haughty favourite. "Dare you dictate to the King?"

"Down with the minions! let the King starch his wife's ruffs, and sew her petticoats! Vive Guise! Vive Navarre!" echoed from mouth to mouth.

At this moment other shouts arose; and, advancing slowly through the crowd, surrounded by attendants and guards, who drove the people in every direction, appeared the ponderous and splendid equipage of Henry the Third and his Queen. Curiosity to behold the extraordinary spectacle which now presented itself to the best

The title of Majesty instead of Grace, lately introduced, gave great offence to the people.

advantage, took the place of the passions which had hitherto agitated the people; and they pressed round to gaze and admire.

Henry and his beautiful wife were seated in their immense and elaborately ornamented coche, accompanied by several ladies, and more than one of the obnoxious favourites of the King, whose effeminate appearance rendered it doubtful, at a first glance, to which sex they belonged: their long hair was curled, and turned over combs; their small ornamented caps of velvet were of the same shape as those worn by the ladies; and they had delicate open-worked ruffs, whose preposterous size had given rise to the observation that their heads thus supported looked like John the Baptist's in the charger: they were covered with jewels, and their beardless faces gave them a most unmanly and childish appearance. Besides these, the carriage was filled with favourites of another description-small dogs, called 'damarets,' obtained at immense expense; apes, marmozets, and parrots of splendid plumage, perched and peeped from the windows, and looked inquisitively on the groups around; while exclamations of wonder, delight, or disgust, greeted them.

"Ah! les maudites petites bêtes! Voilà donc des mignons d'un roi!" and other terms,

were freely dispensed by the sneering and astonished rabble.

Henry, however, had good reasons for not allowing any but civil greetings to reach him on the present occasion. The Swiss deputies had become impatient at the long delay of their payments; and he meditated levying contribution to a large amount to satisfy them: it was therefore very necessary that he should obtain popularity at this moment, and he rejoiced at any opportunity of finding it. He had caused Paradis, as the public oratories in the streets were called, to be erected in various parts of the town; and was on his way to visit and pray before these when he was interrupted by the riot of which he now desired the explanation. With all the suavity and kindness of manner, which he knew well how to assume, he listened patiently to the account given, and even allowed some of the most clamorous of the mob orators to approach his carriage.

When the name of René Bianco was pronounced, a shudder passed over him, and he turned pale, dropping at the same time a bead of his large rosary.

"How," he cried, "dares an adventuring Italian barber to practise against the life of any of my subjects? No man is safe from these foreign plagues. I must see to this. Good people, be content,—you shall be satisfied,—I will see justice done in this case; and rest assured your King will watch over your interests, and not permit a hair of your heads to be injured if he knows it."

Loud acclamations followed this speech, which was delivered with that majesty and grace for which Henry had been formerly so distinguished. Loud shouts of "Long live the hero of Jarnac and Moncontour ! - Long live Valois!"-succeeded to the seditious cries which had been sent up to Heaven a few moments before; and Henry and his train drove off, after issuing commands that the accused should be treated with every care and attention and his wife allowed to remain with him .- an indulgence suggested by the gentleminded Louise, and received by the people with rapturous applause. After this display of enthusiasm in the cause of his subjects, Henry proceeded through the streets, stopping at all the "Paradis," and finally indulging himself and his distinguished companions in a visit to the rope-dancer at the barrier.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GULF.

La Mort ne devoit pas tarder si longuement
A terminer les jours de cette horrible peste.
Innocens, ne pleurez que ce retardement,
Et laissez aux méchants à pleurer tout le reste.

MAYNARD

WHEN Henry returned to the Louvre, he requested an interview with his mother, to whom he related his adventure of the morning.

"This circumstance," said he, "is most fortunate for my popularity, and the execution of an Italian will still more please the people. René must, therefore, find no sanctuary in the palace, and must not be protected."

"What!" exclaimed Catherine, "am I to have my faithful servants torn from me, to gratify the malice of the brutal mob? René shall not be given up!—Let the Huguenot escape if you will, but he shall not replace him."

"That may scarcely be," replied Henry. "I have given my word that justice shall be done in this case, and I know not how I can maintain myself in the good graces of my loving subjects and deceive them at the same time."

"We have contrived to do that before," said Catherine, "and can again. Leave it to me, and let us consider matters of more moment. Prince Casimir's army has already joined Anjou, and the malcontents and Huguenots swell their ranks each day. Anjou proclaims that unless he sees his sister at liberty, he will listen to no terms; and Navarre has sent to claim his wife, with threats of vengeance if she is longer detained. They are now the stronger, and we must yield."

"I have already ordered," returned the King, "that Marguerite's guard should be removed: let us go to her, and endeavour to do away with the bad impression this severity has made on her mind."

"Yes," said Catherine, "she must accompany me to Champagne to negociate a peace, and if we fail to gain her she may injure rather than assist us."

"I would there were something she would ask me," mused Henry, "that I might make a merit of granting it to her entreaties." They lost no time in visiting the Princess; where, in the humblest manner, both mother and son apologised for her late treatment,—deplored the violence of Du Guast towards La Torigni, and threatened him with severe censure for his conduct, which Henry assured her was unknown to him.

The Queen-mother, having left the brother and sister together, Marguerite, whom Mabille had succeeded in interesting in the cause, took that opportunity of imploring his clemency towards Claude, relating the circumstances of his case in moving terms. Henry, delighted at the occasion offered, pretended to be ignorant of the affair; but expressed with great warmth his determination to befriend the accused. Before he left her, he had summoned an officer of his guard, whom he directed immediately to hasten to the Conciergerie, and take all the necessary steps for Claude's release; and showed so much zeal that Marguerite, unsuspicious of the truth, was entirely won, and the apparent regret and tenderness of her brother, aided by his eloquence, succeeded in persuading her to use her utmost endeavours to procure a peace which should ensure tranquillity to France.

Henry, resolved not to lose his advantage by permitting the escape of Bianco, notwithstanding his apparent concession to Catherine, and gave orders that the Italian should be watched, and information given to the police of his proceedings.

Catherine, equally cautious and suspicious, saw at once the dangerous position in which Bianco stood, and felt that she could not trust the King, if he conceived that his interest was secured by the sacrifice of the Italian.

He, meantime, had not been ignorant of what had taken place, and was alive to his own peril; but he trusted to the power of his mistress: and, by shutting himself in her palace, hoped to escape the threatened danger. When he heard that it had been agreed for the Queen-mother and the Queen of Navarre to set out without loss of time on their journey of pacification to Sens, he imagined himself safe if he could secretly accompany them, and thus by his absence leave time for the ferment of popular indignation to pass away. He concealed himself, therefore, in the secret tower of the Queen, and held midnight conferences only with her; while she gave out that she had despatched him to England on important business.

The new trial, meantime, was conducted with great zeal by those who found it a matter of importance to the higher powers, and, although with as little regard to justice as before, answered the end of establishing the innocence of Claude.

Marcel's testimony was admitted as conclusive, and many other witnesses, before kept back by bribes and menaces, now were allowed to come forward. Still, although there was every reason to suspect René's guilt, no positive proof had been produced, and certain messages from the Queen-mother had influence enough to prevent too strict inquiry.

Claude was liberated with honour, and his acquittal was received by the people with transport; but when it was found that René had disappeared, and no measures were taken to discover his retreat, the fury of the expectant populace knew no bounds. Crowds assembled in various parts of Paris, and harangues were made, exhorting the citizens to insist on his punishment. The Queen-mother was openly reviled, and the good faith of the King called in question.

These meetings led the way to political discussions; the state of the country was canvassed,—a meeting of the states clamoured for, and every party maintained in vociferous appeals the general injustice and culpable indif-

ference to the public weal of all the heads of the government.

The actions of the whole life of Catherine were recapitulated: her deceit to Catholics and Protestants;—the infamy she had brought on the nation by her fatal measure of the massacre which all good Catholics abhorred, and which was approved only by interested and malignant persons; her encouragement of foreigners; her crimes known and suspected; her unbounded extravagance and extensive exactions. Pamphlets were published against her, and passages read from them in the streets, and the Discours Merveilleux was in the hands of every one.

All over the walls of Paris were stuck defamatory papers; and one which created much amusement amongst the people and annoyance to the Court, set forth the titles of the King in a ludicrous point of view, calling him,

"Henri, par la grace de sa mère, inutile Roi de France et de Pologne imaginaire, Concierge du Louvre, Marguillier de St. Germain de l'Auxerrois, Basteleur des Eglises de Paris, Gauderonneur des collets de sa femme et Friseur de ses cheveux, Mercier du Palais, Gardien des Quatre Mendians, Père conscript des Blancs Battus, et Protecteur des Capuchins."

Amongst those who listened to and joined in the harangues of the discontented people, were many of that community who had distinguished themselves in the troubles, and were always ready to ferment riots and disturbances in order to profit by them. Crucé and Flé, the butchers of the Faubourg St. Germain, heard not without reflection the general opinion concerning René; and when, after a time, the King, vexed at the sudden stop to his transient popularity, offered a reward to any who would discover and bring to justice the murderer of the President Bailly, they revolved in their minds the eligibility of their being the recipients of the sum, which their necessities, never diminished, made requisite to them.

Captain Florio had departed for Rome with most of his band, having in charge the holy relic which, delivered to the Pope, was to secure to the community great advantages; he was shortly expected to return, and if René was not betrayed promptly he would probably interfere to prevent it, as the bond of amity between them was known to be strict, although their peculiar tie was not revealed.

The Queen-mother's protection was powerful, and it was evidently exerted to screen him from the law; but the King, it was as well known, was anxious to bring him to punishment, and his favour would be secured by his arrest. At a meeting in the Carrières the matter was therefore discussed, and as it was considered that the benefit of the brotherhood might be more advanced by gaining the good-will of Henry, measures were agreed upon accordingly.

Alix, in the tender care of Mabille, and watched over by her anxious husband, slowly recovered, and though deeply agonized at the fate of her father, saw so much to be grateful for in her husband's release, that by degrees her mind became restored to its former tone, and the tears she shed on the bosom of Claude were less poignant.

Belcastel, anxious to quiet the alarm of those dear to them all at La Rochelle, soon took his leave, it being agreed that as soon as Alix was able to travel, they with Mabille, from whom they had resolved never to separate, should rejoin him at the friendly town which owed so much to their valour. With many tears and prayers they separated, to be restored to each other under happier auspices at a future period.

But René, although he felt himself safe in his retreat, could not consent to abandon the desire which he had so long nourished of revenge upon Claude, and determined even yet that he would not be foiled.

He imparted to the implacable enemy of Montgomery the facts connected with Claude's career, and found in Catherine a ready partisan.

"What!" she exclaimed, "must Hydra heads start up to brave me? Will the accursed race never be extinct? The son of Agnes de la Tour shall not go free, triumphant in success. Fate shall yet overtake him."

"To-morrow," said René, "you set out, madonna, for Champagne, and I, in the disguise of one of your grooms, will follow in your train; once far from Paris, I can easily conceal myself till this storm has blown over; and when I return, who knows but your star may again have risen, and you be once more all-powerful? Let me now give into your hands this medal. I have before told you, when you have no longer sons to control you, your destiny will be to reign supreme; - why not a woman, as in England and other countries? - stranger things have happened. When once your mind is brought to the decision, the stars will work the rest. Meantime, take this, and hereafter it may serve you."

So saying he gave into her hands a box containing a medal, similar in some respects to

that which has already been described, and charged her to keep it safely closed from sight, nor open it herself until she had made her last resolve to obtain, by a mysterious act, the power she had spent her life in seeking.

"To-night," said René, "I am to see one of those whom I can trust; he knows the residence of Claude and his wife, and will guide me thither. My visit," he added, bitterly, "is not one of friendship, but I go to pay the deep debt of gratitude I owe them. I shall return in time to assume my station near your Majesty, and quit Paris without question in your company. By daybreak, or before, you will see me again."

Midnight came, and with it, at the door of the Queen's tower, arrived a man muffled in a cloak; he was joined by one who descended the narrow winding stairs which led to the court, and after carefully closing the outer door, the pair proceeded, unchallenged by the sentinels beyond the precincts of the palace. They crossed the river, and after walking a little distance stopped before a house on the quay opposite to the Louvre.

"Now," said Crucé, the butcher, "I have brought you to the spot, and the rest is your own business. I do not like to balk an old grudge; but be as quick about it as you can, as our band are impatient to see you before you quit Paris, and have your directions for the future."

"You are sure Flé is within?" asked René.

"Yes," replied his comrade, "he supplies the house with meat, and the Huguenotaille are, after all, better customers than your good Catholics; he is the suitor of the porteress, and is waiting you there."

"In less than an hour, we meet then in the Carrières?" said René.

"Yes," said Crucé, "I shall be there,—and the trap shall be up ready for you."

As Crucé turned away he laughed inwardly: "He is safe," said he, "and the reward is ours."

He concealed himself in the shadow of the houses, and awaited the event of his treachery. In a few minutes after René had entered the house, a party of soldiers arrived, and stationed themselves near the door.

"Is he within?" asked the leader to Cruce, who on seeing them emerged from his concealment.

"Yes, safe," answered he; "Flé will give the signal in a moment."

At the same time as he spoke was heard the report of a pistol, and the door of the house was thrown violently open; — Flé was seen standing in the archway struggling with Bianco, who writhed in his powerful grasp;—the soldiers rushed upon them and secured their prisoner, while Flé, relinquishing his hold with a brutal laugh, resigned him to their custody.

"So!—you are well deceived, Messire René," said he; "you thought to find the Huguenot here and his pretty wife. I would have willingly helped you if I knew where they were, but we can do their business another time,— and get paid for it into the bargain."

René ground his teeth in fury, and in vain struggled hard with his detainers.

Amidst much laughter and brutal jesting at his expense, he saw the price of his capture paid to the two traitors who had sold him, and with feelings of fury not to be described he was dragged along by the guard towards the prison of the Conciergerie.

The noise and confusion consequent on his capture had roused the neighbourhood, and as daylight was now breaking, and the workmen at different trades were already preparing for their day's employment, a crowd was speedily assembled round the soldiers. As soon as it was announced that the captive was René Bianco a yell arose from the people of hatred and execration. "Give him up to us!" they cried.

"We will do summary justice on him! if he goes to prison St. Catherine will rescue him!"

The guards endeavoured to keep them off, but their number was soon doubled by those of the rabble; from every street and lane new comers increased the concourse, and all clamoured for vengeance on the Italian. René saw that his danger was imminent,—that his fate appeared certain, but he was resolved to make a desperate effort at escape; he renewed his struggles with those who held him, who, pressed by the shouting mob, could scarcely keep their grasp firm. They were obliged also to defend themselves, and while some of their number attacked the people with their swords, the rest tried to make their way forward. A fresh party of the excited and angry rabble, irritated at the resistance opposed to their will, now closed in upon the soldiers, and in the scuffle almost forgot the object of their With one vigorous effort René contention. burst from the man who held him, and springing past the others found himself the first of the enormous crowd. Trusting to their surprise and confusion, and his own agility, he darted onward, and plunging down the first street, directed his way towards the Carrières, as his only chance of concealment and escape.

A loud yell told that his flight was observed, and, like hounds in pursuit, on rushed the mob; cries, howling execrations, were borne on the wind to his ears as he continued his headlong course, but he gained on his pursuers—he doubled, and dived into streets and alleys, while the numbers of those who pursued impeded to a certain degree their swiftness—he had gained the Rue St. Jacques, and far before him he beheld the house of Crucé.

For that goal he made, though even there he felt he might be insecure; the trap-door was said to be open, but could he trust the words of one who had betrayed him?—could he be certain that some one was not there to bar his passage?

On, however, he flew, the surging sounds behind him; he reached the door—it was ajar—darted onwards to the yard, and beheld his betrayer in the act of stooping to unclose the spring-door that admitted to the Carrières. One bound and he had reached him, one blow and the dagger of the Italian was buried in the back of the gigantic ruffian; he fell heavily forward, and the purse, in which were his ill-gotten gains, clanked upon the stone. René leaped down the opening, but found that to close it was impossible, for the body of the expiring Crucé lay across it. There was no time to lose—he hur-

ried to the bottom of the stairs, and as he reached the last step paused to recover his breath, but the sounds of terror which had urged him on burst once more full upon his ear;—he could distinguish words, uttered by the strong voice of the butcher who writhed in his dying agonies,—
"Follow—the path to the right—straight on—our band will help—they are all sworn to betray him."

Which way should he fly? his pursuers had the clue—he dared not take the way he knew, which led to the great temple in the centre. There were other outlets,—one of which he might find, and emerge into the light of day at the other extremity of these tremendous caves.

He chose a dark path to the left, for already he heard that his pursuers had descended;—for a long time he ran panting, exhausted—the blood rushing from his ears,—his eyes blinded by the darkness—deeper and deeper grew the gloom—the air was stifling, vapours of fœtid odour seemed to rise from the caverns round—flights of bats shrieked by him, and flapped their leathery wings in his face — he would have stopped, but he seemed urged on by an invisible power — he felt grasped by unseen hands—he heard or fancied the roaring rabble still near, and shrieks and cries like those which

he had delighted to listen to in the massacre of St. Bartholomew rang through the damp vaults through which he fled.

His heart stopped—his brain reeled, his feet refused to bear him farther—a dim, indistinct ray shot down a passage at a distance—he knew it must come from one of the interior halls where the robbers were accustomed to meet; he tried to call, but his tongue was like iron in his mouth; one more effort he thought, and he might reach the light, and discover some means of escape even yet;—he sprang forward—there was a plash, a dull sound as of a descending mass, and the dark waters of a yawning gulf had received the body of the murderer.



CHAPTE

CONCLU

• • Les v N'ont elles plus de foudre Ne partiront jamais du tri Et la mort et l'enfer qui d

CATHERINE, at the a that René did not arriv patiently; she feared a fallen him, but was faterrible catastrophe who place. Having left a table of her tower, we should follow her imp

granted her, Catherine promised the most advantageous terms to the revolted party. The defamatory sentences pronounced against the Admiral de Coligni and others, in consequence of trials carried on after their deaths, were annulled; and the Duke d'Anjou, the Prince de Condé, and the King of Navarre, pronounced good and loyal subjects, who had taken up arms only in defence of their King and country. Prince Casimir's troops were to be paid, and honours and emoluments offered him; the Governments of the French Princes to be restored to them; and all that could be desired granted to those who of late were looked upon as traitors and rebels.

There was, however, more sound than meaning in all these professions. Artful delays succeeded; and the Huguenots found that their only hope of success was in retaining as much power in their hands as possible, and in crediting as little the professions of their hollow friends.

The Catholics now began to take alarm at the concessions to the Huguenots, which fear had extorted from the King; and the Ligue, that scourge of the nation, started up, with all its plots, and wars, and struggles, and deceptions; the wars of the Three Henries then raged with fury, and unhappy France looked in vain for repose.

Marguerite de Navarre had to deplore the influence of her star, which rose and set on continued misfortunes. The Duke of Anjou, her favourite brother, died of a slow fever, never having, as the famous journalist of the period expresses it, "been in health since his visit to the King at Paris, or recovered the good cheer he met with there, which cost him dear enough."

A grand funeral was made for him; and Henry the Third had an opportunity of displaying his fondness for dress in a new form. He appeared in a robe of violet Florence serge, de eighteen ells in breadth, with a flowing train, which was borne by eight gentlemen, and walked in this state from the Louvre to the church of Saint Magloire, where the body lay in state.

He was preceded by a great number of nobles, Princes, Cardinals, and Bishops in deep mourning. The gentlemen, mounted on white horses, were arrayed in black, with large caps; the Bishops in their rochets, with the scapulary and mantle of black Florence serge; and the Cardinals in their accustomed violet habiliments.

The King's Swiss guard walked with their drums covered with crape; the Scotch archers surrounded his Majesty; and the French guards, at distances, near his person, all having their uniforms and arms covered with black crape.

The young Queen Louise followed in a carriage covered with cloth of tan-colour; she herself alone within, dressed in robes of the same hue: after her came eight coaches covered with black. The body was then brought to Nôtre Dame, and, after a magnificent mass, was buried with great pomp and ceremony. The King, during the whole of the five hours that the funeral procession took to pass from one church to the other, stood at a window of a house opposite to the Cathedral, in order to be seen in his violet robes by all the people. He was accompanied by many of the great opposition Lords, some of whom, particularly the Duke de Guise, with whom he then pretended to be on terms of friendship, were remarked as appearing much more sad than himself: for the amusement which Henry seemed to find in watching the procession, which he did also, from another house in the Rue St. Denis, on the preceding day, had apparently quite banished the grief he was supposed to feel for the loss of his brother. The whole seemed conducted with more pomp than feeling; and the Archbishop of Bourges, in making the funeral oration, was more occupied in thinking of the fine beard he wore than of the subject in question; on which occasion, the following distich was disseminated in Paris, according to the custom of the period:—

Quod timet, et patulo promissam pectore barbam Demulcet Biturix, hoc Ciceronis habet.

Marguerite alone wept for her brother; for it has never been recorded that Catherine even affected sorrow for his loss, although her hatred to Henry of Navarre increased in proportion as these numerous deaths brought him nearer to the throne; for Henry the Third's repeated pilgrimages to Chartres had failed to obtain for him the blessing of children. So fearful was the Queen-mother that the crown should pass to the House of Navarre, that she was suspected of favouring the designs of the Guises, that the Duke should be declared successor, a fact which probably hastened his fate.

The hopes of the Queen of Navarre, that her affection and attachment to her husband would in the end be appreciated and returned by him, were never destined to be realized. Too many enemies and rivals stepped between her and her happiness, and in her solitary abode at the chateau d'Usson in Auvergne she had to regret the destruction of all her dreams, even while

she rejoiced at the successes of him whom she

Endymion passed a few fleeting years in following the fortunes of his beloved mistress, and dying, as he wished to do, in her presence, gained all he had desired, her tears, and those celebrated lines which exposed her to the censure which she was fated never to escape. On him was written the poem which critics have considered a chef-d'œuvre of correctness, but which her kind feelings alone inspired:

"A ces bois, ces près, et ces antres Offrons les vœux, les pleurs, les sons, La plume, les jeux, les chansons, D'un poëte, d'un amant, d'un chantre."

When her consent was gained, that by the dissolution of her marriage with Henry the Fourth he might unite himself to Marie de Medicis,—the affecting letter in which she gave him up her rights drew tears from his eyes, and he exclaimed—

"Ah! unfortunate Marguerite! She knows well that I have always loved and honoured her, but that she loved not me, and that it was her indifference which has separated us from each other for ever!"

Alas! that foes and fortune should thus have

disunited two hearts formed for mutual happiness!

Claude and Alix, with Mabille, whom they attached to them for the remainder of her life. returned to La Rochelle, and in due course of time Claude visited Scotland where he took possession of his small estate. He would not however claim his rights as Count de Montgomery, as he was unwilling to injure the interests of his brothers. He contented himself with their acknowledgment of his birth, and ceded all to his next brother who had been brought up to expect the title. He lived honoured and respected by all of the Protestant party, and had the happiness of witnessing the triumphs of Henry the Fourth. Alix succeeded to her father's wealth, and the Abbey of Bourgueil was sold to the Père Pacifique.

Nantouillet never altered his bachelor state, and adopted the children of Mathurin Lussaut and the pretty Clarice, who lived with him until his death, when he left them independent.

The Queen-mother heard with much satisfaction that Florio, the sole depository of the secrets of her early life,—he whose knowledge she dreaded, and whose revelations would have disclosed crimes to which even those already too

well known to the world would have appeared trifling,-had renounced the world, and buried his wickedness and his remorse in one of the most remote seclusions in the deserts of Calabria, and she smiled secretly to hear that the severe piety of his life had attracted pilgrims to the convent which he had honoured by his selection. She sent from time to time large sums as donations to the holy community, and as a means of obtaining their prayers. It was thought that the honours of canonization would reward the zeal and virtuous example of the brightest ornament of the order whenever the immaculate spirit of Father Innocent, which was the appropriate name he chose, should be claimed by its kindred; and Catherine gained no little credit by the reverence which she appeared to pay to so exalted a character, and the benefits which she bestowed on his convent.

* * * *

In the same chamber in which she had plotted with her son Charles the Ninth the destruction of the house of Navarre,—in the same château of Blois, lay burning with fever and distracted with pain of body and mind the Queenmother.

The horrible tragedy of the murder of the

Duke and Cardinal de Guise had just been committed. She had heard the whole account: the terrible details had been too faithfully repeated to her, and in imagination she witnessed the butchery which was going on in the chamber beneath her own, where her inhuman son superintended the separation of the limbs of his victims. The smoke of the pile which consumed them seemed to rise to her brain, and the dust of their ashes cast to the wind so that no relics might ever be collected by their partisans, -to stifle the pulses of her heart.* It was not regret for their fate which caused her this agony which she could not control, although she had looked to the Guises alone of late for support: it was the fact that Henry of Navarre came like a hideous phantom in a dream nearer and nearer, till but one slender tie held him from the sovereignty of France, and in that vision she beheld the total annihilation of her power.

While she lay in this state the door of her chamber was suddenly thrown open by a rude hand, and, unannounced, King Henry, her son, burst into the room, and stood by the side of her bed. He was very pale; his lips were parched and white, and his eyes glowed with an

^{*} Henry the Third assisted at the burning of the bodies of his victims in a chamber of the palace at Blois.

unnatural fire; his dress was in disorder and stained with blood.

"Madam," cried he, in a piercing voice, "the King of Paris is dead, and henceforth I am King!"

Catherine rose on her couch and looked at him with a stern aspect.

"You have put to death the Duke de Guise," said she. "Heaven grant that this murder render you not a King of Nothing! This work is well cut out, but it must be sewn;—are all your measures taken?"

"Yes, Madam," replied her son,—"all. I have taken such precautions that, in future, you need interfere no more."

So saying, without another word and with a fierce countenance, he turned his back on his mother and left the chamber, as he had entered it, without ceremony.

The spirit of Catherine quailed; she felt that her power was gone; the blood rushed burning through her veins,—her head beat and her heart throbbed violently.

"He shall not conquer yet," exclaimed she, after a pause; "while I have life I will not yield!"

She then commanded her attendants to prepare for her rising, and in spite of their remonstrances and those of her physician, she left her bed and caused herself to be dressed as usual. She then immediately repaired to the church of St. Sauveur, where she heard mass, to the surprise of all to whom her illness was known. On her return she visited the Cardinal de Bourbon, who was detained a prisoner in the castle; she found him in a state bordering on distraction, and forgetting all disguise or respect he poured forth a torrent of abuse and reproach.

"You are the cause of all," he cried. "Did you not seduce us with false promises of security?—did we not rely on your word—on your proclaimed friendship, and are we thus repaid? Deceitful, treacherous woman!—scourge of France, and betrayer of those who trust you—leave me in peace to mourn over the murder of my friends and the miseries of my country!"

Catherine uttered not a word, but quitted the apartment and retired to her own.

"Give me my casket," said she to one of her ladies, "and retire till I summon you."

She was obeyed, and a small ebony casket presented to her. She took from her bosom a key with which she opened it, and disclosed to view several coins of mysterious formation; these she placed on her pillows, and from the box which René Bianco, at his last interview, had given her, she took one which she regarded with extreme attention.

It was a medal of bronze, shaped like a shield, such as the ancient Romans consecrated to their gods. On it was engraved, in relief, the figure of Catherine herself on her knees before an altar, on which was a throne, whereon sat the form of a hideous demon, from whose nostrils issued fire, and whose eyes were dilated with an expression of malignity and fury not to be described. To this form the kneeling Queen appeared to be making supplication;—beside her knelt her three sons, Charles, Henry, and François of Anjou, and over their heads was inscribed—"Soit: Pourvu Que Je Règne."

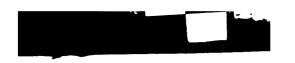
"Yes," muttered Catherine, "I am now resolved,—I will resign him too. I loved Henry beyond my whole soul!—he has abandoned me, and I offer him up as a sacrifice! Let me, Great Spirit!—let me triumph yet, and all I prize in this world and in the next is yours!"

At that moment a loud peal of thunder shook the walls of the castle, and one of the most terrific tempests which had ever been known in France, burst with awful violence over the town of Blois, burning and destroying houses, churches, and towers;—the waters of the Loire rose in billows like the sea, and, overflowing their banks, swept away villages, and desolated the country for miles round.

In the midst of the din of the roused elements, rose the shrieks of one struggling in mortal agony. Catherine de Medicis lay gasping on the floor of her chamber, surrounded by her ladies, who, terrified at the appalling fierceness of her aspect, dared not approach her. For several hours the conflict continued, and, during the whole of that time, her cries and screams filled the halls and galleries of the castle of Blois with terror and amazement Her son heard them, but he shrank from the sound with guilty dread; -all those who had knelt and fawned upon the powerful and haughty woman, whose nod had swaved a world, hurried away from the closing scene with fear and consternation; -one by one her attendants glided from the chamber, and Catherine, the Queen, fell dead upon the flooralone!

THE END.

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